

**DEVELOPING COMIC TEXT/S: REPRESENTATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS OF
JEWISH CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF STAND-UP AND
DOMESTIC COMEDY**

JACQUELINE THERESE KOWEN

KWNJAC001

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This written explication deals with the integration of the forms of stand-up comedy and domestic comedy in order to create a comic text. The comic text explores issues regarding the presentation and representation of Jewish cultural identity. The integration results in both the experienced and imagined truths of the playwright to become **present** on stage. These were points of enquiry in the writing, directing and performing of *DRIVEN: A COMEDY IN 70 MINUTES*, which opened at The Intimate Theatre, Orange Street, Cape Town on the 23 November 2004.

The Introduction deals with defining key terms and forms to be used and discussed in the thesis, informing the reader of the writer's purpose in creating comic text by integrating stand-up and domestic comedy.

In the first chapter the generating of comic text is explored. The generating of comic text is achieved by using the **comic persona**. The comic persona is developed using *identity*, *outside voice*. Once the comic persona is in place it is possible to: create an authentic stage persona for the stand-up comedian and to create a 'theatrical climate' consisting of plot, characters, themes and narrative storylines.

In the second chapter the idea of pastiche (borrowed elements) is explored in terms of its impact structurally and stylistically in the writing, directing and performing of *DRIVEN*. Structurally this impact is evident via the use of 'pastiching' the structure of situation

comedy (sitcom) and stylistically through the use of Yiddish and the influence of other comedians' performance styles on the comic persona.

The third chapter delves into the way Jewish cultural identity is **represented** through stand-up comedy and Jewish cultural identity is **presented** through domestic comedy. The stand-up comedian, through persona, audience relationship and other devices associated with the form, becomes the representation of Jewish cultural identity. Characters, story and situation, through the use of both comic traits (elements associated with Jewish cultural identity) and stereotypes, become the presentation of Jewish cultural identity.

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INTRODUCTION

(i) Towards integration

Concerned with the writing and directing of comedy, my task has been to find a voice for myself, a South African Jewish woman. I have always loved plays that make use of narrators in some form or another, who look in and comment on the action and world of a play. I wanted to create a play where I, Jacqui Kowen, could look in on my world and comment on it to an audience, as myself. The need to do this arises out of the fact that I have never been able to identify with any representation or presentation of a South African Jewish woman, whether a character in a play or a stand-up comedian. By this I mean that I never find commonalities between myself, and what is being shown to me, making me dismiss what I see and classify it as 'untrue'. On the other hand I have always been very comfortable with the American means of presenting and representing Jewish identity through comedy. I needed to create a framework whereby I could make my truth both present and true to an audience.

Given my fascination with stand-up comedy and my love of both Neil Simon and Woody Allen's use of quirky situations, I decided that I wanted to create theatre that integrated stand-up and domestic comedy. By doing this I felt that I could represent South African Jewish cultural identity through the use of stand-up comedy. I could also present Jewish cultural identity by using clearly theatrical¹ scenes concerning the mundane and domestic that become a pastiche of American models, such as a Neil

Simon play or an episode of *Seinfeld*², but are clearly located in a South African context. This integration is a means to make my truth present on stage.

Great comedy is the result of keen observation of the world. The comic writer, a sharp and perceptive man who stands on the sidelines and views the staggering gyrations of mankind, records in his detached and facile manner the errors of humanity. He sees all the silly, preposterous, utterly absurd things that his fellow man does. He takes note of the countless deviations from the norm in the lives of his colleagues in the flesh. (Duprey, 1962:150)

The creator of comedy takes observations that he/she has of daily life and society and makes them entertaining to an audience. *DRIVEN: A COMEDY IN 70 MINUTES*, involves an attempt to find a way of making my observations entertaining and humorous to an audience, but also both theatrical and present³. The audience can gain insight into the way I see my world at this very moment through my communication with them and witnessing mundane incidences happening in my life *now*. This feeling of 'present time' can be achieved through the integration of stand-up and domestic comedy.

I believe that a comedian, (in this case, myself, Jacqui Kowen) performing on stage in her own text, can integrate the forms of stand-up comedy and domestic comedy, making this integration a pastiche that in turn informs structure and style. Through the use of comic persona to generate text, themes and narrative storylines emerge creating a format that can make both experienced and imagined truths *present* when exploring issues of Jewish cultural identity and representation.

¹ The terms 'theatrical' and 'theatricality' in the context of this thesis implies the putting on stage of elements associated with theatre, such as actors, set etc with the intention to draw attention to artificiality, as well as heighten both comic **style** and **performance**.

² *Seinfeld* was an American sitcom created by Jerry Seinfeld and Larry David. The sitcom ran from 1991-1998. The comedy revolved around Jerry Seinfeld, a stand-up comedian living in New York and his circle of friends. The show involved the use of stand-up comedy monologues performed by Seinfeld, as a technique to start, finish or comment on both content and themes occurring in each episode. Stand-up monologues would mirror action in each episode and vice-versa.

³ 'Present' in this context implies both: 'up to date' (with issues such as current events and current belief systems) and 'immediate', providing instant gratification for an audience.

(ii) Defining stand-up, domestic comedy and pastiche

Stand-up comedy is a form of comedy that gained popularity in the United States in the late 1950's. (Limon 2000:1) Before this time, stand-up comedy was 'joke-telling'. (2005:online) Stand-up comics warmed up crowds before acts of entertainment and kept the audience amused during intervals. In the late 1950's stand-up comedy shifted from quick jokes and one-liners to monologues, often incorporating elements such as satire. Stand-up comedy relies on the existence of the comedian. The definition of what a comedian is can be described in two ways. A comedian can be an actor who acts in comedies or a performer of comedy. (Byrne, 1999:38) An actor that acts in comedies usually acts as a character different from him/herself, with a different background, point of view, status etc. While there might be commonalities between the actor and the character, it is clear that the comedian in this case is an actor playing a character. These boundaries are set up in various ways. For one, the character exists in the world of the play, which is separate from our world, on a more technical level: the presence of a writer or director, or both.

Secondly, and in the context of this thesis, a comedian can be described as someone performing his/her own material, by him/herself for an audience, more widely known as a stand-up comic/comedian. A stand-up comic differs greatly from an actor who acts in comedies, namely because most stand-up comics write and perform their own material, thus the stand up comic is generally much closer to his/her material and the boundaries between writing, performing and directing can become blurred. When a stand-up comic performs before an audience, it is often the consensus of the audience

that, this is who the person is. The stand-up comic is therefore always present and accountable for what happens on stage. The style of the stand-up comedy is informal, often conversational. The stand-up comic is synonymous with being him/herself. The audience sees the stand-up comic as a person not different from themselves and existing without the guise of character.

David Marc (1989:15) sees the 'absolute directness' of artist/audience communication as the 'definitive feature' of stand-up comedy and stresses the importance of the use of monologue:

...that it's primary structural element is the comic monologue, a collection of verbal jokes that may be augmented by physical gags...most important, the monologue is a freestanding presentation rather than a part of a narrative drama.

I believe that stand-up comedy can move out of 'freestanding presentation' and become a part of a narrative outside of itself, through integration. The form of comedy that integrates with stand-up comedy to create a more formal theatrical event, has to do so in a way that is natural and not forced; the two forms must compliment each other and not seem separate from one another. Domestic comedy becomes the form that integrates most naturally with stand-up comedy. The term 'domestic' refers to home life and family affairs, but can also imply everyday existence, in other words, 'domestic life'. (Allen,1991:347) Domestic drama features plays about '...ordinary people dealing with every day problems in the average home. Uncomplex in plot and dialogue'. (Granville, 1952:59) Domestic comedy deals with mundane and everyday situations. A comedian often builds material around observations of the both the mundane and domestic, the everyday. Integrating with domestic comedy allows the comedian to exist in her text on a level that does not feel artificial or contrived and allows the comedian to have a smooth transition from a stand-up comedy routine into

a more theatrical scene involving other characters: a domestic style of comedy can offer this possibility both thematically and structurally.

Once these forms are integrated the result both textually and visually becomes a pastiche. The term pastiche in the context of this thesis implies using or 'borrowing' elements from other forms (Smith, 2003:162) to create a different structure and style. In other words, *DRIVEN* is made up of elements integrated from both stand-up and domestic comedy, to create a pastiche. In *DRIVEN* attention is drawn to the elements that stand-up comedy is made up of. Most notably playing with the idea that Jacqui⁴ is 'real', yet she interacts with characters and takes part in the action on stage. Domestic comedy is used in terms of content and action in scenes, but is heightened and exaggerated through character and performance.

The stand-up comic is the agent for this integration. The presence of the stand-up comic is what serves to integrate the two forms. Essentially this presence feeds off a comic persona⁵ and it is this persona that generates the comic text and links the content thematically. The use of comic persona is also vital in performance.

(iii) Jewish cultural identity (in context): The task of presenting and representing

Stuart Hall (1990:223) defines cultural identity in terms of:

...one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people',

⁴ 'Jacqui' is explored in this thesis in terms of how she exists as both a stand-up comedian and character in *DRIVEN*.

⁵ Just as an actor plays a character, so a comedian uses a comic persona to generate material and laughter. This persona is made up of various elements that will be discussed in the next chapter.

with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history. This 'oneness' underlying all other, more superficial differences...'

Hall, (1990:225) then goes on to write about another point of view of cultural identity: in this second position he states that while points of similarity do exist, there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute 'what we really are' or rather, since history has 'intervened' what we have now become. Cultural identity is never fixed as it constantly undergoes transformation. It is subject to the 'play' of history, culture and power.

Judaism is a religion that has a strong cultural identity. The religion itself has set ideas about the world and the way Jews should live their lives. There is however, a lot of flexibility with regard to certain aspects of those beliefs, and a lot of disagreement about specifics, but that flexibility is built into the organized system of belief that is Judaism. (2004:online) However, many people who call themselves Jews do not actually believe in the religion at all. Many Jews worldwide call themselves secular: they do not believe in God or any of the religious beliefs of Judaism; they may practise the rituals and celebrate some of the holidays, but they do not see these actions as religious activities. It seems that most secular Jews in South Africa think of their 'Jewishness' as a matter of culture and ethnicity. (2004:online) This rings true for me. When I think about how being a Jew influences my life I think of my Jewish culture. In other words: the food, the Yiddish⁶ language, proverbs and stories and the observing of certain holidays and festivals. In this respect I define myself as a secular Jew. One cannot deny that there are cultural traits that are shared

⁶ Yiddish is a German dialect that was used by Jews in eastern, northern and central Europe and the areas to which Jews from these regions migrated. It contains elements of Hebrew, Russian and Polish and is commonly written using Hebrew characters. (Berkowitz, 2003:12)

by all Jews, all over the world. Jews in many parts of the world share numerous cultural aspects that are informed by tradition and religion, passed down from generation to generation. I feel that these cultural aspects form my Jewish identity, more than the religion itself.

Comic presentations and representations of Jewish identity hone in on cultural identity in both the media and the theatre. This cultural identity is greatly influenced by American culture. Plays written by Neil Simon, films by Woody Allen and the television series *Seinfeld* have played an imperative role in the representation of Jewish culture, but this is an American perspective that blends with a New York style of cynicism. In Allen's films New York is virtually a character. *Seinfeld* is set in New York, as are the majority of Simon's plays. Jewish people in South Africa identify with these characters, their neurosis and their way of seeing the world. There are many reasons for this. In my opinion the most important reason being the strong immigrant culture of Jews. For example, both an American and a South African Jew could have German Jewish parents, making their upbringings and attitudes similar, as well as the range of people, characters and types that they have either heard about or actually met. Also important to note are certain Jewish stereotypical characters that translate worldwide. Given this scenario the task of *DRIVEN* becomes complex: the task of creating a South African model of presenting and representing Jewish cultural identity and what this identity implies for Jacqui, a Jew living in South Africa today. The difficulty of this arising out of the fact that the American model is so dominant in the media, and while Jewish characters do appear on stage in South Africa, their cultural identities are not put into sufficient focus in a comic context.

To present is to 'introduce, offer or exhibit, especially for public consideration'. (Allen, 1991:942) The term 'presenting' or 'presentation' implies exhibition or demonstration, implying theatricality. The 'presentations' in *DRIVEN* are achieved via **scenes**. Scenes are when Jacqui interacts with other characters. The term presentation implies showing or demonstrating. Presentational theatre draws attention to elements of illusion. (White, 1995) This is achieved in *DRIVEN* through various devices. A bare set with minimal props, costumes visible to the audience, the clear convention of actors often changing and getting into character in front of the audience. The scenes often serve to demonstrate or show what Jacqui has spoken about. They also serve to 'present' certain stereotypes and ideas associated with Jewish cultural identity. Domestic comedy in *DRIVEN* thus has a presentational purpose. These scenes are not only 'demonstrations' of Jacqui's world, but also presentations of Jewish cultural identity through the use of character, dialogue and situation.

To represent is to act as an embodiment of, rather than show or play a part of on stage. (Hartnoll, 1995:56) Representational theatre aims to make an audience forget that they are watching a 'play' and tries to create the illusion of reality on stage that closely resembles the reality of the audience's own lives. Both representation and creating the illusion of reality can be seen as the role of 'Jacqui' in *DRIVEN*. By using stand-up comedy to communicate to her audience, she becomes 'the real thing'. She is undeniably Jacqui Kowen, a Jewish woman, a representation of Jewish women living in South Africa, more specifically, living in Cape Town. What she says becomes more 'credible' and 'real' because the audience sees her as herself, she is not playing a character, like the other 'actors' who change costume in front of the

audience and play multiple characters. With the other members of the cast there is a clear feeling that they are actors, they are louder, and over-played in comparison to Jacqui, who is the 'real person' in a cast of actors and over-the top characters. Her style is conversational and observant of all the incidents that happen on stage. Like a stand-up comic would retell something he/she observes the audience actually gets to witness Jacqui's observations. The characters have a presentational purpose. They are characterized by their theatricality.

In order to fully understand the integration and resulting pastiche, it is necessary to examine the specifics of stand-up and domestic comedy in the generating of comic text.

1. GENERATING COMIC TEXT

1.1 Stand-up comedy and persona

Stand-up comedy is a sense a 'quick fix' form of theatre. A stand-up comic has only a few minutes to reel an audience in and a stand-up 'set' usually only lasts ten to twenty minutes. In my attempt to cultivate an identity as a stand-up comedian, I realized that I did not really feel comfortable in this genre. One of the main problems being, that, I would classify my stand-up style as one relying on storytelling. I enjoy telling stories, whether they are childhood memories or simply an incident that has happened to me on a particular day. Given this description, clearly all stand-up comedians are story-tellers, the difference being that within these stories are constant gags and 'fillers' that keep an audiences' attention, for example, one-liners or direct audience confrontation, which I felt uncomfortable doing. An easy problem to fix. Instead of being a stand-up comedian, I could perhaps perform comic one person shows in a more theatrical context, so in other words, instead of performing for ten minutes in a bar or club, perform for longer, in a theatre and turn the stand-up material into a play. But I felt that there would still be something missing. If I were to talk solidly by myself, without a microphone and the conversational style of stand-up, I would lose credibility as a 'real person' and would become an actress playing a character. When a stand-up comedian performs, an audience automatically assumes that this person is real and this is how he/she sees the world. Authenticity is seldom questioned. Playing a character as opposed to a 'real person' would lose the myth of reality that can be perpetuated through stand-up comedy; this myth being that the stand-up comedian is the exact same person both on stage and off. My instinct was

that if I could find a relationship between theatre and stand-up comedy, I would feel more comfortable in the genre. The means to develop this relationship lies in the comic persona.

My interest in stand-up comedy lies in the comedian's blending of self and reality into persona and theatre. An example of this would be Sarah Silverman⁷, who opened a set saying, 'I was raped by a doctor, which is so bitter sweet for a Jewish girl'. (Horowitz, 2003: online) The humour of this line works on various levels. For one, it embraces the stereotypical scenario of a Jewish woman wanting to marry a doctor and uses this to shock the audience into laughter as they know this stereotypical scenario, but were not expecting this particular result. For me, what is most striking about the statement was that my first reaction was laughter. Given a few seconds to digest the statement, I immediately began to wonder if it was true or not. If it was true, then I would feel guilty about laughing, but if it was untrue, I could laugh again without thinking of the implications of the line. To me, this is the attractiveness of stand-up comedy; its play between reality and theatrical devices: the way it uses both to provoke laughter. Silverman is herself, a Jewish female, a 'real person' and the audience believes what she says. Yet through the use of, for example: a microphone, voice and even exaggerated gesture, she becomes theatrical. I argue that stand-up comedy's vehicle for bouncing between reality and theatre is the comic persona.

If my identity is how I wish to see my self and how I wish to be seen, then the persona is the means I use to inter-react with the outside world...Jung used the word persona to describe that part of the person that is used to interact with the outside world, which is separate from the self, being broadly, who we really are. (Donnellan, 2002:108)

⁷ Sarah Silverman is a Los Angeles based stand-up comedian who due to her provocative comic material, which tackles issues such as race and abortion, has been compared to Lenny Bruce.

I believe that the process to achieve a successful comic persona, involves delving into identity⁸ and processing fragments of certain elements of identity in order to create a comic persona, which then is capable of offering an authentic experience for the audience. Through this process, the comedian is able to establish a theatrical climate, which includes characters and themes. Drawing examples from female Jewish comedians, a successful comedian will always have a comic persona that is used when generating material and performing. For the stand-up comic, the comic persona is usually an extension of herself⁹. Where examples are concerned, I feel that the Jewish female is an interesting model to follow, given the implications that this identity can lend to both the journey towards a comic persona and creating theatricality in performance.

1.2 The comic persona

As a consequence of the stand-up's direct address to the audience, the layerings of person and persona are more difficult to unravel than in representational drama. Just as an actor wears a costume in a play, a stand-up can present an image.... (Marc, 1989:18).

The comic persona is the means by which the comedian communicates with her audience. The comic persona is what the audience comes to accept as the comedian's identity. It is the vehicle through which the person exists as a comedian. The comic persona, unlike the person, is always humorous and if this comic persona is developed adequately, it is a constant source of entertainment for its audience. The comedian uses herself as her text. Therefore the base from which the comic persona can be developed is drawn from identity. Within the development of the comic persona, lies

⁸ Elements that make up a particular person that both can and cannot be discarded.

⁹ This process is not one that is exclusive to the Jewish female comedian, therefore when using the term comedian, stand-up comedian or stand-up comic, the implications may also apply to the male comedian.

the opportunity to generate text that goes beyond material for stand-up comedy alone. The comic persona that is well developed can transcend into other forms. Most notably, in America, comic personas have been used to create television sitcoms such as *Roseanne* and *Everybody Loves Raymond*. These shows became the 'acting out' of the stand-up routines of Roseanne Arnold and Ray Romano. Both deal with domestic issues such as family ties and raising children. However, the idea of the protagonist as a stand-up comic is completely neglected. Arnold and Romano are characters within the situation. The comedy is domestic. *Seinfeld* on the other hand sees its protagonist as himself, Jerry Seinfeld: a stand-up comedian. Each episode begins with Seinfeld performing stand-up in a club, giving us an idea of the overall theme of the episode after which, two stories run concurrently and eventually meet to create meaning and the episode is resolved. The stories are essentially mundane observations of life that are irrelevant. The episodes have some of the characteristics of stand-up in their structure because of the fast pace of the scenes, the mundane observations and material they deal with and the far from perfect resolutions.

In terms of theatre, Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (1984) was generated out of his perspective of life as a fifteen year old. The play can be seen as a domestic comedy with a narrator. The narrator is Eugene Jerome, telling us about life with his family, pre-World War Two in Brighton Beach, New York. Eugene is not only a narrator commenting on the action, but a character in the play, involved in the action. His comedy is fuelled by his comic persona: he is Neil Simon at the age of fifteen. An awkward adolescent Jewish boy who has adolescent problems. Simon sets this up by making Eugene consciously write his memoirs throughout the play, so we can get an insight into how he sees his life and life around him, making it clear that he hopes

that his story will one day be a book or a play. We witness Eugene dealing with issues that are a function of his age, such as being caught between boyish enthusiasm for baseball and the adolescent discovery of lust, and constantly feeling put upon for being the family errand boy and scapegoat. He is authentic as both a character and a narrator, but it might not be clear to an audience that he is in fact the playwright as teenager. Yet, knowing or discovering that Eugene is Simon is not the goal of the play. Essentially, it is a domestic comedy, taking its audience to a certain time and place to witness through the eyes and perspective of Eugene. (Berkowitz, 1992:175)

The play is thus lodged in the past. It is set in the past and the values and manners on which it comments on, are also set in this past. While the play is experienced through the eyes of Eugene, Simon of course manages to add retrospect and irony that are a function of Simon as a playwright. (Harris, 1994:115) He is no longer fifteen and uses the insight he has gained in adulthood to fuel the other characters and the various comic situations that arise in the play.

DRIVEN has much in common with both the mentioned sitcoms and *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. As in *Seinfeld*, Jacqui Kowen is 'playing' Jacqui Kowen and her observations might seem mundane. The domesticity of both *Roseanne* and *Everybody Loves Raymond* are reflected in the domestic scenes in *DRIVEN*. The placing of a protagonist/narrator through whom we see the world of the play as in *Brighton Beach Memoirs* is used. Yet, it is the placing of the comic persona in the context of *DRIVEN* that differs from how it is used in the mentioned sitcoms and *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. While Jacqui does serve as a narrator and a character involved in the action, she is herself because, for one, I (as writer/director) kept my name, appearance, style, speech patterns etc. Jacqui is playing herself *now*. She is twenty-

four in 2004. The comic persona serves to remind the audience of the 'presentness' of the play through Jacqui Kowen who is real and living in present time.

1.3 Generating and developing the comic persona

1.3.1 Identity

In order to generate a comic persona one needs to accept, acknowledge and embrace one's *identity*. Identity has many dimensions and definitions, psychologically, sociologically, spiritually etc. In this context, identity will be used to describe characteristics/elements that make up a person and that cannot be discarded. Ultimately however, some of the characteristics that will be mentioned can be discarded, often by means of drastic measures, for example biology and religion, the argument here being that these characteristics, even if altered or changed, ultimately affect who a person is. For example, a man who becomes a woman will still retain elements of his/her gender. A Jew who converts to Christianity will still retain elements of his/her former cultural identity. A male comedian in drag is, in essence, still a man. Therefore, examples of elements of identity that cannot be discarded include: gender identity, cultural identity and autobiography. Then there are personal oddities and phobias that are not always changeable, for example fear of heights, depression or any idiosynchronicity that is personal to the comedian.

Other comedians found in the culture a connection to the deep part of their own self, an attachment to their family, and perhaps, most important, lots of material. Since the sixties, when comedy focused on self-examination, the comedians looked at themselves and found the funniest parts to be from the Jewish side of their lives. (Epstein, 2001:64)

Historically, humour is associated with Judaism, America seeing the rise of the Jewish comedian in the fifties and sixties. (Limon, 2000:2) Jewish humour has developed

from generation to generation with the passing on of Yiddish stories and proverbs comprising of Jewish types and archetypes, for example the *schlemil*¹⁰ or the *menesh*¹¹. Judaism is also a culture with a strong immigrant tradition, allowing for many authentic stories. The role of religion in this culture is often ambivalent. Epstein, (2001:22) when describing Woody Allen says:

Woody Allen felt alienated from people, society and strange objects...he found in Jewish life the same sense of alienation. That is, he didn't find religion or culture particularly useful, but the Jewish consciousness, the way of looking at the world, helped him.

The Jewish female then, needs to find her way of looking at the world. There is a wealth of Jewish female stereotypes, the matchmaker, the Jewish mother, the Jewish princess etc, as many stereotypes as there are for the Jewish male. As the journey is for the Jewish male, she needs to find her way of looking at the world: how her culture and these stereotypes affect her perceptions and therefore her material. What becomes distinctive about her material is her approach to her cultural identity, which I argue encompasses religion, ethics and status in society. These experiences differ greatly as no one Jewish female will have the exact same experience and within this framework the comedian can find commonalities with audience members of both sexes and different cultural identities.

...for the stand-up, self is text to a much greater extent than for the dramatic comedian. Fatness, skinniness, shortness, tallness, beauty, ugliness, race, class, ethnicity and/or whatever visible or audible baggage the comedian carries in life is not merely fair game for exploitation on stage but a textual feature of the act that demands use-or requires avoidance. (Marc, 1989:18)

On a more superficial level, elements of identity can also be drawn from appearance, tall, short, fat, skinny, etc. While these elements can to a certain extent be changed,

¹⁰ This term originates from Yiddish proverbs and stories and implies a man who can never get anything right and has constant bad luck.

appearance is always a source of material to feed the comic persona. But appearance is an element of a comedian's identity that cannot be discarded as it is always visible to the audience. The comedian, who is conscious of aspects of her appearance and draws attention to it, can spark instant recognition with her audience. Changes in her appearance (whether conscious or unconscious) can also provide comedy. Appearance often acquaints the audience with the comic persona before the comedian has even started speaking. This is clear when one looks at Irit Noble and Tracey Klass¹². Irit Noble's appearance is 'camp'. She is unconventionally beautiful, covered in lip gloss and glitter and as she herself describes her appearance, 'false hair, false lashes, false breasts...'. (2001:online) Tracey Klass's physical appearance is less synthetic, as she describes it, 'the way I look' is exactly what I am and contextualizes what I talk about, life from a middle age perspective. (2001:online) I started to think about my own appearance. I am short. I was always the shortest in my class. I have never experienced being tall. This identification of being short opens lots of areas for the comic persona to delve into. What are the implications of being short? I decided to associate them with not being able to get my needs met. This is indicated from the moment Jacqui first comes on stage. She wants to talk to the audience but she cannot reach the microphone. Her first chat with the audience implies that she feels that no man will find her attractive because she's short. Her height affects her ability to drive (she has to sit on a telephone directory to be able to reach the wheel) and throughout the play Jacqui's height appears to be one of the reasons why she has no voice in her family. The space often swallows her, and family members easily 'upstage' her, in part because they are taller.

¹¹ Also originating from Yiddish proverbs and stories this term implies a good man who carries out good deeds.

There are the elements of identity that can be changed and that are never fixed. A person who was once single can get married, a person once unemployed can obtain a job etc. These changeable elements should always fall below the elements of identity that are not changeable and be used as 'sub-plot' by the comedian, but must be presented with the same intensity and importance as unchangeable elements. An example of this is Jacqui wanting a driver's license, which holds the same importance as the fact that she is short and Jewish. Not having a driver's license is changeable. If Jacqui is going for driving lessons everyday she is eventually going to get her license. At this moment in time the lack of a driver's license is imperative in understanding this comic persona and the lack of resolve is what is generating the humour. I believe that elements of identity that are so clearly changeable in the audience's mind but are presented as unchangeable by a comedian are a good source of humour, because an audience member will either relate with the comedian or find her ridiculous, either reaction can evoke laughter. As a comedian's career progresses they can find humour in the change of elements in their life. For example, Jacqui could get her license and keep crashing her car. She could separate out from her family and find humour in her experiences in the 'real world'.

The criteria identified by identity for the comic persona can also be made up of 'borrowed elements'. The comic persona can borrow elements from the stand-up comic's life, that do not necessarily pertain to the person's identity, but rather what they are at liberty to 'dip into' in terms of background and experience. The nature of stand-up comedy depends in many respects on borrowing. The comedian borrows

¹² Irit Noble and Tracey Klass are both South African Jewish comedians. Both are Cape Town based.

from life, family, friends, and often, other comedians in terms of jokes and style. Nothing is 'off limits'.

Once the comedian has established which elements of identity to use in her comic persona, she can begin to borrow ideas and opinions around these elements, in order to expand and exaggerate these elements. For example: Jacqui's 'Jewishness'. Even though I felt it was innate, because I am Jewish, I decided to exaggerate it textually by constantly referring to Yiddish words and Yiddish archetypes such as the *rachmonus*¹³. Essentially Jacqui is a *rachmonus*. She is there to be pitied because she pities herself in so many ways. The play revolves around what she lacks: a driver's license, a boyfriend and independence. It is this status that informs her identity.

I also borrowed aspects of my religion, even though I am not religious. 'Jewish' is a vital part of Jacqui's persona in that it is evident in her appearance and dictates the way she sees the world. This opened up many possibilities when it came to creating characters.

The comedian needs to embrace elements of identity because they are a source of material that she can use at her leisure. Elements that are not changeable become a constant source of material for the comic persona and elements that are changeable become sub-plots of the comic material. For example, 'short' and 'Jewish' are elements that are constantly referred to throughout *DRIVEN*. The idea of 'single' is not as important as 'short' and 'Jewish'.

¹³ Jacqui refers to Ruthie as a *rachmonus*. 'Someone that you pity so much, you can't get rid of them. (P17)

1.3.2 Outside voice

In sociological terms, Herbert Mead (in Hogg and Abrams, 1988:10) described the concept of *self* in terms of its relationship to society. He also stressed the importance of *self objectification*, the ability to turn an objective eye on self and society. This is what a comedian does. The comic persona stems from the filtering of the elements of identity, by the *outside voice*. The term *outside voice* implies that the comedian is an author of her work, writing for herself, editing her life to find humour. The outside voice first decides which elements of identity are suitable to be adopted for the comic persona.

I believe that the comedian can never 'over-indulge' where autobiography is concerned, if it has been *sifted* by the outside voice. The more a comedian makes reference to her own life, the more the boundaries between reality and the structures associated with theatre are blurred, the experience being relayed becomes real and is presented to the audience directly from the person who it happened to, as opposed to a character, who exists in the world of the playwright.

The main sources of humour can be found in autobiography or memories, both painful and pleasant, as well as observations that stem from the comedian's daily life. The task of the outside voice to sift through experiences of pain and daily observation in order to find recurring themes, stories, situations and characters that can be theatricalized by the comic persona.

When dealing with pain, experiences may have been a result of the elements pertaining to identity. For example, painful experiences as a result of being a woman,

painful experiences occurring in childhood, painful experiences associated with appearance and so on. The comedian needs to theatricalize pain in order to make it both accessible and humorous to an audience. Within tragedy, the comedian can find comedy. As the emotions associated with the perception of pain are unique to the individual, her recalling of it is also unique. The task of making these painful experiences humorous and accessible rests on a number of elements that pertain to theatricality and often to quality in the comedian's performance. For example, the comedian can divert the painful situation by reverting to a more mundane observation. Wendy Liebman, who, in a stand-up routine performed at the Montreal's 'Just for Laughs' comedy festival in 1999, (screened on M-Net in 1999) began her routine by saying, 'My boyfriend and I broke up because he wanted a long-distance relationship...he told me to go to Hell...' the next line that follows is, 'is there a doctor in the house? My mother wants me to marry you...'. Liebman uses this stereotyped scenario differently to Silverman. Liebman offers relief for her audience. Silverman identifies the pain and provocatively comments on it: 'that's bittersweet for a Jewish girl'. The comedian's attitude to pain depends on the reactions she is wanting from an audience. Jacqui's pain is expressed via the way she relates to the audience, telling stories and using one-liners in the hope to divert the audiences attention from anything remotely painful but somehow still hitting the point home. An example of this would be when Jacqui describes growing up in her house, which is covered in antiques. Her description reaches a peak when she describes the house as not being baby proof. The house is being described as unwelcoming. She goes on to say, 'Throwing a ball in that house would have been a death wish. Simple maneuvers such as going to the toilet had to be carefully thought out so as not to disturb a hanging plate or picture' (P6). Jacqui needs one more phrase that tops the difficult

task of getting to the bathroom and the audience would really hit the root of the tragedy she is describing. Instead, the next line is, 'Hence my concept of space is completely screwed up, which is probably why I can't park...' which reminds the audience of another sore point. Jacqui treats both her unwelcoming home and her inability to drive as if they are both equally painful. The two painful incidents once juxtaposed become humorous.

The outside voice can also identify certain 'rites of passage' or 'key moments in life' whether unique to the comedian or also experienced by the audience. The multiple notions of what a rite of passage or a key moment might be to a comedian versus what the audience perceives as a rite of passage or key moment, may prove comic. I started to think about key moments in my life and realized that one of the most important ones was as a young child, finally finding out why I did not have Christmas and learning that I was Jewish. I do not really remember exactly how all this was explained to me, but I do remember different things that people told me to try to explain. This coupled with the fact that one of the first things that I learned about Jesus (via my siblings) was that it was believed that the Jews were responsible for his death. I cannot remember exactly but there was some sort of running joke between my father and possibly my brother about my Bobba (my father's mother) killing Jesus, an image that even though I was a young child, I found strangely amusing. In order to really get full comic benefit from this story I decided that it would be imperative for Jacqui to be haunted by this image as a child and this to be the root of her somewhat ambivalent feelings about her Jewish cultural identity.

The outside voice can be defined as the link between the comedian and her comic persona. The outside voice is the comedian stepping outside of herself to observe

herself, her functioning in society and the functioning of other people within her life and her society; such observations add to authenticity in the work, in turn this demands autobiography and depth of the author's own experience.

1.3.3 Arriving at the comic persona

Jacqui sets up her comic persona the moment she walks on stage and cannot reach the microphone. This is followed by the first thing she says to the audience:

From where I am standing, life is pretty crap. How crap, you may wonder...well lets just say that last night at 11 o'clock my cell-phone rang, and I had to answer cos it wasn't my mother...the guy on the other end of the phone clearly had the wrong number cos he asked me, 'what's your favourite scary movie?' I replied, 'I'm short and Jewish...do you still want to know?' He hung up (P1).

This sets up many aspects of the comic persona. Jacqui's lack of confidence in her appearance for one, but, most importantly the fact that she is short and Jewish, the two pieces of her identity that will inform the play do so at the beginning when she recounts the man hanging up the phone on her, proving indeed that her life is 'pretty crap'. The audience will later learn that her height makes her appear child-like which makes her an easy target for both babying and bullying by her siblings. Her Jewish identity has caused multiple problems, the biggest being her neurosis, which is why she is afraid to drive and perhaps more importantly become independent. Stylistically, she has set up the idea that she is not afraid to be both honest about who she is and self-deprecating. Once she has opened herself up and simultaneously put herself down it can become more acceptable for her to do the same to the other characters and vice-versa.

The comic persona needs to go beyond stereotype. A comic persona that relies on stereotype can generate laughter, but often lacks authenticity. The persona does need to embrace stereotype to a certain degree, because the genre of stand-up comedy

demands instant gratification for its audience. As Perkins (in Baehr and Gray, 1996:22) points out that stereotypes often short circuit critical thinking. However, she also goes on to say:

...stereotypes are often valid...they are often effective in so far as people define themselves in terms of the stereotypes about them ; that they are structurally reinforced; that they refer to role performances, and so on.

Stereotypes are useful because they spark recognition. Where they generate originality and humor is when they are completely shifted via characters, themes or structures. A Jewish comedian, for example, has a wealth of stereotypical traits to choose from that are easily accessible to audiences. A comedian that deliberately tries to turn these stereotypes on their head, has to have a complete understanding of them and how they function in society first. However, the use of stereotype becomes interesting when examined later in terms of the scenes in *DRIVEN*.

The comic persona is shaped by the theatricalization of the elements of identity, identified by the outside voice. The comic persona takes 'artistic license' with the comedian's autobiography and experience making the comedian and her experiences digestible and humorous to an audience. The comic persona shifts where necessary to accommodate the audience, an audience, which, demands instant gratification and does not always wait for the persona to 'settle in'. By performing for audiences the comedian learns which elements of her comic persona are likeable and which are not and how to put forward the comic persona as quickly as possible. It is up to the comedian to know which elements of the persona will be appropriate to which audience, or maybe the inappropriate use of the persona is what the comedian needs to use to generate a particular response that she might want from her audience. The

persona is not just the 'facts' about the comedian, it also embodies the comedian's opinions and style of joke/story-telling.

A successful comic persona therefore includes elements of identity that are both unchangeable and changeable which in turn indicate the comedian's view of the world and the people in it. This then indicates the direction in which the material needs to move and the comedian's relationship with the audience. Once this has been fully developed, via identity and the outside voice, the theatricalization of stand-up comedy now starts to take place as the material develops characters, structure and recurring themes.

Jacqui's comic persona consists of three unchangeable elements: short, Jewish and female. The changeable elements are her lack of a driver's license, her lack of independence and her single status. In serving as a representation, Jacqui cannot be a stereotype. She needs to be believable. Once her comic persona was in place textually, her performance became a pastiche consisting of various Yiddish archetypes. Jacqui became a patchwork of Yiddish archetypes.

1.4 Possibilities for the comic persona

Successful comic personas in the United States for example, have been used as the base of sitcoms, relying heavily on the comedian as protagonist and his/her comic persona fuelling the comedy. This leads me to believe that comic theatre can also consciously be built around a comic persona: the comedian can become both playwright and protagonist. This can develop in the material of the comedian because

the framework of stand-up comedy already allows for characteristics associated with a theatrical climate. The placing of the stand-up comic into a theatrical climate of dialogues, relationships, themes and narrative storylines can be achieved through integration.

In this integration the stand-up comic is not an actress playing a character, but rather a stand-up comic, doing her job, standing up and commenting on the way she sees the world. The audience can physically be in the world of the comic through the integration of domestic comedy. In other words, the audience will actually get to see the world that the comic is commenting on. They will get to form their own opinions on this world and therefore make their own judgments. The world does not always necessarily have to be seen through the comic's eyes because when other characters are physically involved she does not have entire control of the situation or the last word as she would if this was just a stand-up routine. The audience is also sharing the world with the comic. Seeing it as she does, but still forming their own opinions.

In generating the comic text for *DRIVEN*, the stand-up comedy as well as the scenes, were developed using: identity, borrowed elements and autobiography. All of which were theatricalized by the outside voice, in order to create a comic persona and text. Through establishing the persona, recurring themes and storylines were identified. Out of these themes and storylines, characters and plot emerged. As stand-up deals with the mundane, the bulk of these themes and storylines deal with domestic scenarios. These scenarios generally focus on character and situation to generate laughter. 'Borrowed elements' also become useful in creating structure and style.

2. PASTICHE: BORROWED ELEMENTS IN *DRIVEN*

Through stand-up comedy, most notably the comic persona, the text is generated. The task then becomes using domestic comedy to create style and structure through the use of pastiche.

The disappearance of the individual subject, along with its formal consequence, the increasing unavailability of the personal style, engender the well-nigh universal practice today of what may be called pastiche. (Jameson, 1991:16)

Taking Fredric Jameson's definition of pastiche into account, it becomes important to differentiate between what he defines as 'parody' versus pastiche. While both mimic other styles, Jameson believes that parody capitalizes on the uniqueness of other styles and seizes on their idiosyncrasies and eccentricities to produce an imitation, which mocks the original. (Jameson, 1998:4) Jameson sees pastiche as also imitating a unique style, but without the satirical impulse or laughter, parody without humour, a kind of blank irony.

In the context of *DRIVEN* pastiche is used as a structural device, namely the structure of the play relies on borrowed elements. Criteria set forth by the forms of stand-up and domestic comedy, as well as stylistic elements borrowed from Epstein's identification of 'the observational comic'. Rather than imitating these forms, *DRIVEN* uses them to create comic text that can achieve, a distinct style and voice for Jacqui Kowen, as a playwright and performer. With these elements come criteria and conventions in performance. My path to finding 'personal style' is done through the understanding and incorporation of these borrowed elements and the possibilities that

exist within them structurally in creating a new form: namely the integration of stand-up and domestic comedy.

2.1 Finding a structure

The scenes in *DRIVEN* are a pastiche of every day domestic situations in terms of both content and themes. For example: Jacqui sharing a meal with her aunt and uncle, and this resulting in her later feeling inadequate and embarrassed due to their 'stereotypical' behaviour. Scenes also serve to 'colour in' the experiences of the stand-up comedian by borrowing key phrases or ideas mentioned in the stand-up. For example: Abraham referring to Jacqui as 'Miss Jacqui', Jacqui mentions her mother's fascination with the French language and this is witnessed when she chooses the title for the article she wants to write about the stolen roses. The domestic scenes borrowing elements discussed in the stand-up cause recognition and this recognition leads to laughter.

Structurally, the scenes are a pastiche of scenes one would see in most American situation comedies or 'sitcoms' on television. Each domestic scene contains: one-liners to keep the audience laughing, conflict between characters, a climax and a resolution. Stylistically, the scenes have a quick pace, not allowing for much character growth to appear on stage. The scenes that do not involve the family are all self-contained, like an episode of a sitcom. The scenes involving the family play with the idea of continuation.

DRIVEN as a whole has much in common with the structure of an episode of a sitcom. Byrne, (1999:117) identifies this structure as being made up of:

- **Teaser**-a short comic sequence taking place before the start of the show.
- **Act one**- the plot of the show is set up and the first problem is introduced.
- **Act two**- the plot 'thickens', this is usually done through bad things happening to the protagonist, but disaster is avoided.
- **Act three**- just as it seems as if disaster has been avoided the 'worst case scenario' occurs.
- **Climax**- the protagonist's 'well-being' is put into jeopardy, but the climax leads to the plot being resolved and leaving the characters as they were at the start of the show.
- **Epilogue**- a short sequence, often not referring to the main plot, essentially to 'wrap up' an issue in the episode, or play with a character or characters' traits.

DRIVEN begins with a teaser: Jacqui's first words to the audience, which sets up both the comic persona and informs the audience of an essential element of the plot of the show. The scene that follows can also be seen as part of the teaser because it sets up the world that Jacqui lives in. The scene introduces her aunt and uncle, setting up the idea of the kind of characters that exist in this world.

Act one then begins with the introduction of Jacqui's parents and her first problem that will manifest on stage: the arrival of her brother and sister. Act two would then include all the scenes up until the announcement that Adam and Debbie are moving back to Cape Town. The climax clearly being: the breaking of the plate.

Three parts make up the epilogue in *DRIVEN*. Jacqui addresses the audience to let them know what became of the situation seen in the climax. The scene that follows with Hymie and Esther, and Jacqui's final address to the audience, all form the epilogue. The epilogue is handled this way in order to pull focus back to Jacqui's journey that needs to take place outside of her family and the context that they put her in. In this way, the epilogue serves as a 'sum up' of both the domestic scenes and the stand-up sequences.

Through the use of a structural pastiche of the sitcom *DRIVEN* is able to contain the subject matter of everyday domestic scenarios and make them humorous to an audience. Through the use of this structure, the audience is not directly following one specific plot line, but rather, various scenarios that Jacqui is faced with. This encourages instant gratification for an audience in that the scenes are so compact that they stand on their own, allowing for multiple opportunities for audience recognition and identification.

2.2 Using Yiddish

With many Yiddish archetypes and sayings at my fingertips, I decided that I needed to incorporate some of them into *DRIVEN*, because the Yiddish language focuses on 'human foibles and weaknesses, self-mockery often accompanied by pity,' (Berkowitz, 2003:11) a characteristic of the Jewish culture, and definitely a driving force in its humour.

Various Yiddish words and terms are used throughout *DRIVEN*. *Bobba* is the Yiddish word for grandmother. Interestingly, the term *bobbe-myseh* implies a silly tale, or nonsense, such as the story Jacqui's father weaves about her Bobba. The audience also gets to meet two characters that are set up as archetypes from the beginning: Hymie and Ruthie. Hymie is a classic *schnorrer*, this word originally meaning 'beggar', implies someone that is tight with money or ungenerous. (Rosten, 1970:42) Ruthie is a *rachmonus*, someone to be pitied.

Jacqui's persona fits in to this framework as she incorporates many Yiddish archetypes, but also tries to steer away from them, such as the idea of being a *schnorrer*, which embarrasses her when Hymie behaves like one and explains Jacqui's generosity towards Betty. Jacqui also fits Berkowitz's description of how Yiddish is used to generate humour, because by sharing her experiences with an audience, she is mocking herself and enlisting pity.

Epstein (2001:302) identifies three comic personas that originate from old Yiddish stories. The *schlemiel* is a pitiful, unlucky and socially maladjusted person, a *nebbish* is a helpless ineffective person and a *schlimazel* is someone who constantly has bad luck. Jacqui has elements of all these personas, but what becomes distinctive in performance is to play to the heart of what these personas imply: they imply 'victim'. Jacqui constantly sees herself as a victim: she never blames herself for the fact that she cannot drive or that she is single, nothing that has happened in her life has ever been her fault. It is taking up the comic stance and trait of 'victim' that makes this persona distinctive.

2.3 Jacqui's style

Exploring the Jewish female persona, opens the door to the development of my own comic persona, as a Jewish female and how I can attempt to create a comic style that is distinctive, given the ways that persona has been used in the past. In terms of performing my comic persona, and given the style in which I was performing this persona, I felt that it was imperative to move away from, for example, a stylistic stereotype and 'stance'. In the past, it seems that successful female comic personas seem to be either camp¹⁴ or unruly, seldom escaping either format. (Rowe:1995:5) Examples of this would be Bette Midler and Roseanne. Midler's persona the 'Divine Miss M', adapted characteristics of gay male culture into her persona through the honing in on characteristics associated with the stereotype of 'camp'. (Winkler in Mock, 2000:86) This notion of camp was reflected in her appearance, dress and relationship with her audience. Roseanne on the other hand was 'unruly' through her adoption of male characteristics, her weight and candid speech that was often inaudible.

There are clear elements associated with the idea of 'camp' in Jacqui's comic persona and performance. South African Jewish female comedians such as Gilda Blacher, access the notion of camp through playing a *kugel*¹⁵. The stereotype of kugel is camp because, camp, as Bergman (2002:online) points out, through placing aesthetic concerns above ethical concerns, is a source of humor that is always easily accessible to an audience. This is what the kugel is renowned for and audiences identify with

¹⁴ 'Camp', according to Bergman (2002:online) has three elements: incongruity, theatricality and humour. Bergman also goes on to say that camp, '...depends on the perception or creation of incongruous juxtapositions.'

this type. Jacqui is also camp, but without using 'kugel' as a vehicle. Although she is not a 'type', Jacqui's comic persona is camp because it embraces incongruity and theatricality. I believe that Jacqui's comic persona is camp both textually and in performance because she is 'outspoken'. She speaks freely about the world and how she sees it. Yet she is small and inconsequential in her own world. It is this incongruity that makes Jacqui camp. While she might be powerful behind the microphone, she is not really in control of her life. The theatrical way Jacqui integrates talking to the audience through stand-up and allowing them to witness her life through domestic comedy can also be seen as camp as it draws attention to artificiality.

To perform my comic persona, I needed to find a style of joke-telling and comic performance that fitted my persona. Deciding this helped me to arrive at a style. I strongly feel that Jacqui's most important role in *DRIVEN*, is that of observer. The style of my humour in the stand-up sequences is observational (characterized by being an observer) and I have what Epstein (2001:246) defines as a 'Jewish comedian's sensibility': clear observations about life and a sense of annoyance at having to deal with life's 'petty travails'. I consciously borrowed elements from two American Jewish comedians, whose styles I would class as observational: Paul Reiser and Jerry Seinfeld. Paul Reiser was an influence because of his blatant, yet controlled approach to his neurosis. Jacqui is highly neurotic, but I did not want this trait to be overwhelming in performance. Jerry Seinfeld was an excellent model to follow because in his television show, he exists in both the role of stand-up comedian and

¹⁵ Branford (1987:188) defines a kugel as a Jewish woman, 'who's interests are men, money and fashion, speaking a recognizable drawling dialect...'

character. His approach to both is 'dead pan'¹⁶ and not altered to suit each form. He remains consistent, and finding a consistency became my challenge.

Essentially, what I was borrowing was an observational, 'New York style' approach to performing stand-up which favours a 'dead pan' and straight approach to the comedy. This was then incorporated with my own voice, accent, speech patterns and style.

The use of borrowed elements in *DRIVEN*, as a whole, helps to both identify and incorporate elements and conventions that impact both structure and style. This encourages flexibility where these structures and styles are concerned. Pastiche enables the creation of a style and structure for the integration of stand-up and domestic comedy.

¹⁶ Seinfeld favours understatement. He does not appear to overstate emotions and involvement.

3. REPRESENTATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

In creating the text, **representing** and **presenting** Jewish cultural identity became the focus during the processes of writing, directing and performing. It was important to establish how the stand-up comedian would serve as a representation of Jewish cultural identity and how the domestic scenes would serve as a presentation of Jewish cultural identity in performance.

3.1 The roles and functions of stand-up and the stand-up comedian

Once Jacqui's comic persona was in place, it became necessary to establish how stand-up comedy would integrate with domestic comedy; what would the function of the stand-up sequences be and what would the function of the domestic scenes be?

The convention of stand-up comedy is set up at the beginning of *DRIVEN*. As the audience comes in they see a microphone on a stand, the most instantly recognizable icon associated with the genre. For an audience, seeing this microphone implies that whoever speaks behind it will speak truthfully and probably engage directly with the audience. There will be no fourth wall.

The stand-up comic may use various devices to relay the material and in so doing, point of view becomes imperative. A stand-up comic constantly shifts between one point of view, to another. The three main points of view can be defined as follows: a narrator point of view, a self-point of view and a character point of view. (Perret, 1993:28) The narrator point of view is a how a comedian perceives an incident as a

non-participant or observer. The narrator/comedian is never directly involved in the experience that the joke is about but rather, observes, reports or narrates it. This is a very common approach in the joke-telling style of stand-up. Jacqui's utilizes this technique when speaking about her family and informing the audience about events that they will not see acted out by the other characters.

The self-point of view is how the comedian relays an incident as a participant. When using this technique, the comedian is involved in the experience. Whereas the narrator point of view explains and observes, the self-point of view calls for the comedian to reenact an experience as if it is happening. Jacqui does this in her stand-up routines, for example, when she talks about her driving lessons. (P4) In the domestic scenes, she is literally a participant in an experience. So in other words, the idea of self-point of view is extended beyond stand-up comedy in *DRIVEN*. Jacqui speaks about Abraham and the audience actually gets to meet him and watch her engage with him.

Character point of view is how the comedian chooses to perceive an incident as something or someone else. Character point of view is anyone or anything that the comedian can act out as a character. Most notably, this is when Jacqui becomes Abraham in her stand-up routine. (P4) It is the only time in the play that Jacqui impersonates anyone for an extended time, in telling a story. Oliver Double, (2000:316) refers to a device used in character point of view, which he calls: 'momentary characterization'. 'Separated from the flow of narrative...the mental leap which transforms...into character'. (Double, 1997:43) This occurs very briefly.

Jacqui uses this technique when describing her Bobba (P6) and driving with the respective members of her family. (P35)

By making Jacqui a stand-up comedian before a narrator and a character, she becomes more real rather than 'make believe'. The audience has direct contact with her before the other characters do. They get to know her first and can share the humour of the other characters and the various situations with her. Thus the role and function of stand-up is to enable Jacqui to become a representation of Jewish cultural identity as we witness the implications of this identity through her eyes. She enforces the sense that she is real by still talking to the audience when the actors come on stage to change for the first scene, her style conversational without the microphone, enquiring about her appearance as she would to friends. Once seated with Aunt Esther and Uncle Hymie she maintains her audience contact by addressing a comment to them about Uncle Hymie. During the first scene she breaks away to tell the audience what her aunt and uncle have 'let slip', the fact that she does not have a driver's license. Rather than telling her aunt and uncle about Abraham and her driving lessons, Jacqui shares these experiences with the audience. (P4)

Jacqui is rather embarrassed that the audience has witnessed what transpired in the restaurant with her aunt and uncle. This gives her the go ahead to explain the blatant stereotypes that the audience has just met, by giving a hint of what her feelings about her culture are. They are clearly both ambivalent and confused, as the audience will witness throughout the play. The stand-up comedy that follows (*Now That I'm Grown-Up*) lasts about six minutes and is the longest stand-up piece in the play. (P5-8) There are various reasons for this. It is this piece of stand-up comedy that needs

to: contextualise Jacqui's comic persona via story-telling, reflect Jacqui's feelings about her Jewish identity and introduce various characters and themes that will be explored in the play.

The opening of the play gives an instant visual understanding of the comic persona: short and Jewish. *Now That I'm Grown-Up* goes deeper into the comic persona. This piece of stand-up is Jacqui's attempt to explain why she is as she is. She cannot drive because she is neurotic and she goes on to explain the reasons for her neurosis. Largely this neurosis is blamed on the fact that she is Jewish, as well as her eccentric family, but another important factor is the house she grew up and still lives in. She feels that Father's collection of antiques stunted her development and her ability to reach milestones. This knowledge is important because *DRIVEN* centers around Jacqui's desire to break out and be independent.

We learn about Jacqui's confusion about her Jewish identity. She does not understand some of the customs and sayings, for example, 'Baruch Hashem'. Much of these problems have been caused by not understanding that she was Jewish at a young age, the only aspect of Judaism being explored is the notion of guilt: give money to charity if you do something wrong is a lesson encouraged by Jacqui's Bobba. Jacqui's Bobba clearly kept the religion to herself instead of passing it on, when Jacqui describes her Bobba's key phrase it is : '...according to MY Jewish religion. (P6) Being put in an Anglican nursery school has also given Jacqui a sense of displacement, further enhanced by being told that her Bobba killed Jesus. She describes being put in a Jewish day school, as putting her on the road to normality, perhaps because of the insight given to her about her religion. The blatant lack of 'Jewishness' in the

religious sense in Jacqui's first family can be a reason as to why she describes them as 'a group of eccentrics', and her upbringing as '...by no means conventional...' can also be seen as meaning not religious.

Introducing Jacqui's family is the most important function of *Now That I'm Grown Up*. Jacqui makes constant reference to her family. When the audience eventually gets to meet them, there is comedy in the fact that they are just as Jacqui has described them causing preemptive laughter as well as recognition. The family thus exist on two levels: Jacqui's presentation of them and the presentation of them by actors, a presentation which becomes more credible once Jacqui, the 'real person' has described them.

The next two pieces of stand-up function differently to *Now That I'm Grown Up*. While also serving to gain insight into the comic persona, *Sometimes I Find People Boring* (P17) and *I Need Some Clarity* (P23) serve to conclude a scene in order to move into another. The stand-up here can be thematically linked to the scene that Jacqui is moving into. For example, Jacqui speaks about her inability to maintain friendships: the scene that follows involves meeting two of her friends. The stand-up can also indicate a change in setting: Jacqui's home becomes unbearable, so she explains that she needs to do a good deed and the audience moves into Gurion's House.

The ending of *DRIVEN* leaves Jacqui wanting to go on her journey of self-discovery and her need to find the means to do so. There is by no means a clear resolution, but rather, a tying up of loose ends in the plot. The audience is left to decide whether

Jacqui will truly be able to break out of her framework. She does not make any promises with regard to this, but views driving as the first step. To achieve that feeling of *present* there would be no point in trying to resolve Jacqui's life on stage, especially as when one watches a stand-up comedian perform, they make no attempt to, for example, solve their problems or attempt to make life more pleasant for themselves. The ending rather deals with resolving present obstacles.

3.2 Presenting Jewish cultural identity

3.2.1 'Playing Jewish'

All the scenes in *DRIVEN* are clearly presentations. This feeling of presentation is achieved through the use of the actors. A factor that I feel cannot be ignored is that the only other Jewish member of the cast was Nick Volpe. This was problematic throughout, as the other actors did not always have the framework of understanding that Nick had merely because they are not Jewish and textually the play has a strong Jewish through-line and feeling. I decided that 'being' Jewish on stage was not nearly as important as 'playing' Jewish. But the playing of 'Jewishness' was problematic throughout rehearsal and performance. Jews all over the world can relate to one another due to the understanding of certain givens of the religion and the way of life that it promotes. In the initial stages of rehearsal I led discussions about up-bringing and reactions to various realities of life, seen from a Jewish perspective in order to compare them to a non-Jewish perspective. The aim was to help the actors understand a Jewish frame-work. I felt that the key to 'playing Jewish' was for the actors to take on an **attitude** and **rhythm**.

An attitude was found through finding the comic trait that the character was dominated by¹⁷. Each actor essentially played from one dominant comic trait. This was a through-line for all their respective characters. In other words each actor's various characters relied on the same comic trait both textually and in performance. An example of this would be the comic trait that Nick worked with which was that he was a 'spoiler'. All his characters spoil situations: Hymie cannot behave in a restaurant and cannot leave a nice tip without drawing attention to it. Adam is 'whiney' and often provokes Debbie. Tevya insists on telling old jokes, even though no one is really receptive. As each character exists on stage for such a short time, finding the comic trait of a character allowed the actors to shape and sustain their characters' comic journey throughout the play.

Rhythm was found primarily through speech patterns rather than the body. In the initial stages of rehearsal the focus was on emphasizing the 'right' word in a line and finding the 'right' inflection. This was done 'parrot fashion' with the actors literally repeating their lines after me to find what I believed to be the correct emphasis to generate laughter. Essentially, I would say a line as I had heard it from a person in my life who had actually said it, or how I would imagine a particular person saying it. I then insisted that the cast watch episodes of *Seinfeld* paying close attention to the way those characters use emphasis and inflection as those are both identifiably and recognizably Jewish. For example, whispering things that are 'too awful to say', (Simon:8) phrasing ordinary comments as questions and learning the art of

¹⁷ The idea of finding a dominant comic trait for a character was suggested by my supervisor, and throughout my Masters I have used it when directing comedy to help actors find character and understand how a situation can become humorous through defining a character's way of behaviour.

'kvetching'¹⁸. What helped rhythmic challenges the most was the identification that South African Jews speak primarily through the nasal passages, a generalization perhaps, but like when using an accent this was a useful tool in developing both speech patterns and character. Speaking through the nasal passages opened the door to understanding which words to emphasize in a phrase and helped with the idea of kvetching.

From their first entrance it is clear that the actors are 'playing'. They come on as themselves and argue over who is going to play which part. They slip in and out of character through the change of costume and props in front of the audience. In the context of play, it does not matter then if the actors are Jewish or not: they are clearly 'playing' Jewish. Their playing of the respective characters is meant to be 'larger than life' and exist on a level of heightened reality so that the audience questions whether these characters are actually who they are imagining them to be, whether they are real or 'make believe'. I feel that this became quite problematic given the domestic style of the comedy and the implications that this had on setting and pace. While the actors did not play realism, it seemed that heightened reality became difficult to achieve until in performance. When the actors felt laughter, the need to impress the audience and make them laugh more became an incentive, which I feel did not lead to over-playing, but rather gave the actors the confidence to exist in a heightened reality that did not feel contrived.

¹⁸ To 'kvetch' is to complain habitually, the term comes from the Yiddish word 'kvetshn' meaning to squeeze or to complain. (Rosten, 1970:45)

3.2.2 Elements of Jewish cultural identity in presentation

In both cinema and theatre, when ethnic or cultural identities are explored, certain elements are honed in on, probably in the attempt to try and please audiences from all backgrounds. These elements became interesting to me when working on the scenes in *DRIVEN*. Koff in her paper entitled *The Other-and the Search For Identity Within* (2004:8) identifies the following elements: food, an outsider looking in at the culture, a generational struggle between modern and traditional values and to resolve the plot, the family eventually succumbing to the inevitability of change within culture.

I did not want to write a play that had 'typically Jewish' scenarios, such as Friday night Sabbath dinner, or a Passover Seder. While these occasions are of vital importance, they would not be an adequate reflection of the everyday of my life, because, as a secular Jew, more often than these occasions, I eat less formally at home or in restaurants with family members. Eating is a vital part of my culture, but it does not have to be traditional food eaten on a traditional occasion to present my cultural identity adequately. Food can rather serve to represent comfort or the shoving down of emotions and avoidance of issues such as confrontation. This is clear via Debbie who always has a packet of chips in her hand, to both exert power over Adam and to avoid the issues she might be facing in her life. When Jacqui complains about her siblings coming home, one of her biggest complaints is how much food they will consume. She feels that she will have to hide food if she is going to eat. The breakdown of the comfort zone that she lives in with her parents is symbolized through food.

The outsider looking in is usually a romantic interest or friend of the protagonist. In *DRIVEN*, Jacqui is the outsider looking in. While she is clearly part of this culture she is also an outsider looking in and commenting on it. This is achieved via the vehicle of stand-up comedy and the direct communication with the audience that this vehicle allows her.

The struggle between modern and traditional values is an imperative theme in *DRIVEN*, the exploration of this is fragmented, because Jacqui's Jewish identity literally exists in fragments. It seems she does not really understand what the traditional values are, but has rather picked up little bits of information throughout her life and has decided what is useful to her, without necessarily understanding these traditions in their context. An example of this is the idea of *Tzedakah*. Tzedakah is the Hebrew word given to all acts of charity, however the nature of tzedakah is very different to the idea of charity. The word 'charity' can often come to suggest benevolence and generosity, the word 'tzedakah' means righteousness, justice or fairness. (1999: online) In Judaism, giving to the poor is not viewed as a generous act but rather an act of justice and righteousness, a performance of duty. Giving the poor their due. (1999: online) It is also common for Jewish homes to have a *pushke*, a box or tin to collect money for the poor. Jacqui's concept of tzedakah is somewhat altered to suit her. It is a way for her to deal with guilt. Her Bobba enforces this by reiterating that when you have done something wrong, it is good to give money to charity in order to alleviate guilt. Jacqui's lack of understanding of the concept of tzedakah also allows her to be taken advantage of in modern day Cape Town, firmly believing that giving money to Betty was indeed a righteous act.

Tzedakah itself is a form of or falls under the category of *gemilut chassadim*, which means performing acts of kindness. Tzedakah is performed with money and is directed towards the living and the poor. Gemilut chassadim is usually performed with your body and is directed at both the living and the dead, (2004:online) for example, burying the dead is considered an act of gemilut chassadim. Jacqui visiting Gurion's House is an act of gemilut chassadim and she is well aware of this. However, she goes there to make herself feel better and ends up leaving feeling far worse. She essentially goes there because the people that live there are the last generation in her mind of traditional Jews in South Africa. They understand the religion and the way of life. They could offer insight, but they do not. For example, Tevya like many others, also plays in to American cultural identity, telling Alan King¹⁹ jokes whenever possible. Martha and Gerty's way of 'making things better' is to try and find Jacqui a husband.

Nothing really changes culturally for Jacqui's family or any of the characters in *DRIVEN*. The only thing that does change for this family is when a plate breaks in the climax and they have one less antique on the wall. This becomes symbolic of Debbie and Adam's separation from their first family which is forced because they have 'broken' something very important, even though it is a 'thing' as opposed to something like a religious, cultural, or moral law. Jacqui's journey in *DRIVEN* often becomes a question of whether her culture is the reason as to why she is as she is. Even she cannot answer this question. The only way for change to occur, in Jacqui's mind, is to get a driver's license.

¹⁹ Alan King was an American comedian, actor, producer and writer, rising to fame in the mid fifties. Four of his books were published one of which includes *Alan King's Great Jewish Joke Book*.

3.2.3 Using stereotypes

The presentations in *DRIVEN* often rely on the use of stereotypes. There are various reasons for this. For one, stereotypes spark recognition. Recognition can spark laughter. A stand-up comic will start a set with a joke or story that he/she knows is guaranteed to spark laughter and win audience approval. The first scene in *DRIVEN* needed to do just this, as well as set the precedent and convention that this show was an integration of stand-up and domestic comedy. The audience needed to feel as comfortable as possible: recognition of stereotypes can achieve this. Aunt Esther and Uncle Hymie are blatant stereotypes, in spite of themselves. They are well aware of the stereotypes that exist around their identity, but they unconsciously play right into them. That is the comedy of these two characters, for example Hymie says, ‘...everyone has these pre-conceived notions about us...’ (P5) one of which the audience knows, that Jews are ‘tight’ with money. Hymie has already complained about the price of the pasta, yet while he makes this statement he is adding up the bill to see if it is correct. They are both paranoid and stereotypically try to get involved in issues that do not concern them, such as Jacqui not having a driver’s license.

Abraham has a stereotypical accent and attitude. He is a Cape-coloured man. Once two clear stereotypes like Aunt Esther and Uncle Hymie had been introduced to the audience, I felt that it would be acceptable to play with other stereotypes associated Cape Town life, such as someone like Abraham and *bergies*²⁰. The difference between the interaction between Abraham and the *bergies* and Jacqui and the *bergies* became stereotypical. Abraham is thoroughly dismissive, denying any connection with them. Jacqui clearly has ‘white guilt’ and tries to be as nice as possible, until

they harass her when she is stalling the car. The anxiety cancels out her 'civil' behaviour and all bets are off as she shrieks at the bergie. The use of stereotype in this scene is a presentation: it is the actors 'playing'. This is accentuated by the actors clearly 'getting into character' in front of the audience, and an actor on the side of the stage, trying to play a bergie and taking the portrayal very seriously.

Another scene that incorporates the use of stereotypes is the scene at Gurion's House. The old women in this scene behave stereotypically, trying to find Jacqui a boyfriend and believing that marriage would be the answer to all her problems. They then go against type, by saying that maybe she does not have to get married, essentially implying maybe marriage is not the answer. This going against 'type', depresses Jacqui even more. In essence she has gone there because these people are stereotypes and are therefore predictable. They will try and set her up and they do believe that she will get married, and this is some form of comfort. Yet, in this scene she is told that she does not have much ambition and drive, and probably will not get married. Her visit Gurion's House to bolster her ego falls flat when the old people do not play into type.

In the last scene of the play, the idea of presenting stereotypes as untrue or unrealistic becomes apparent when the two male actors swap parts. The roles have reversed since the first scene and the waiter is now playing Hymie and vice versa. This demonstrates the idea of presentation, actors presenting characters, and as they are presenting it makes no difference which actor plays which character. It is a presentation.

²⁰ *Bergie* is South African slang meaning someone who is both homeless and a beggar. Branford (1987:26) describes a bergie as a vagrant, usually living on the slopes of Table Mountain in Cape

Purdie (1993:116) sees the ending of a comedy, as the part that is 'serious', in a sense the audience does not find those actions of the characters that constitute such closure funny. There will often be a solemn moment, but a happy ending moves the audience out of their joking understanding while usually creating a buoyant imagination of future pleasure in a fictional world. *DRIVEN* achieves this through its ending: a final stand-up sequence in which Jacqui tells the audience that she has every intention of getting her driver's license. She believes that by getting her driver's license she will be able to 'find a place for herself in the world'. She will be able to escape her first family and the framework through which she has had to live her life up until now. Jacqui leaves the audience with the hope that she might achieve success. She will go beyond stereotypes that she does to a certain degree embody. The comedy arising out of the fact that she might not get a driver's license, as well as what is waiting for her in the world if she does, both of which are actually serious.

When writing a comedy exploring cultural identity, stereotypes cannot be ignored, especially as the Jewish culture has so many comic stereotypes associated with it. Essentially stereotypes should be used to generate laughter and recognition, while simultaneously finding truth that exists outside of these 'types'. For example: while Uncle Hymie and Aunt Esther are stereotypes, their presence serves to contextualise Jacqui's experiences of Jews in Cape Town. Through the use of stereotype, the old people at Gurion's House present an older generation with different values. The reality of many Jewish stereotypes, to me, as a Jew, is that they are accessible and can even be 'loveable' to an audience. The key is in choosing which ones to portray. I

felt that it was acceptable to use stereotype as long as I was not using ones that were in any way insulting, offensive or cruel to anyone: essentially, as long as they did not put Jewish people in a negative light. Yet it is important to remember that just because a playwright is Jewish, it does not imply that they will only present Jewish characters in a positive light. (Schiff, 1982:30) My goal was to present my truth: Jewish people in Cape Town as I see them, rather than stereotypes. Stereotypes were used to encourage laughter and recognition, rather than 'truth', Jacqui being an agent for truth, as well as situations at home with her family.

CONCLUSION

My central aim in writing *DRIVEN* was to represent a South African Jewish female character and present the realities in her life. I believe that Jacqui is an authentic comic persona. Audience members tapped into this persona both thematically and stylistically. Accessing this comic persona has opened the door for me, as a writer and a performer of comedy. While I keep having different experiences throughout life, my process in generating the comic persona and text are invaluable, as through this process, one can continually find characters, themes and plots for comic material, and from there, one can play with comic forms and structures.

I also believe that I have been successful in representing and presenting Jewish cultural identity, given the criteria that I set for myself. If anything, I feel that I managed to make elements associated with this identity accessible to both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences.

The response from the Jewish community in Cape Town was extremely positive, indicating that they were satisfied with the representations and presentations. I feel that this enjoyment arises out of the excitement of Jewish audience members seeing themselves and people they know on stage. In other words actually seeing the South African Jewish context and characters on stage. This essentially allows a Jewish audience to forgive any flaws they might detect, as they are so pleased to be represented, in whatever form this representation takes. Therefore characters like Hymie, Esther and the old people in Gurion's House were successful, even though they are stereotypical in parts.

For the non-Jewish audience member, enjoyment arises out of being invited to witness domestic scenarios with a completely different point of view and sensibility. This sensibility becomes clear to the audience through Jacqui, who almost serves as a 'tour guide', teaching non-Jews the language and style of this world. The domestic scenarios and relationships whether with family or other in *DRIVEN* are accessible to both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences, as everyone at some point in their lives has been in these various situations.

DRIVEN is a semi-autobiographical play, dealing with the representations and presentations of South African Jewish cultural identity on stage and making both experienced and imagined truths *present*. It is about the perceptions of a Jewish South African woman at present time. This feeling of 'presentness' is achieved through the integration of stand-up and domestic comedy. Integration is achieved through the presence of the stand-up comedian in her own text. The comic text is developed through the generating of a comic persona, which creates a persona for the stand-up comedian, as well as themes and storylines for domestic comedy. This results in a structural pastiche and becomes a vehicle for exploring presentations and representations of Jewish cultural identity.

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DRIVEN: A COMEDY IN 70 **MINUTES**

BY JACQUI KOWEN

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1 Mount Prospect Drive Constantia

7806

CAST

Jacqui Kowen

Hymie, Adam, Tevya – Nick Volpe

Esther, Debbie, Loren, Gerty – Kate Liquorish

**Waiter, Father, Abraham, Harold, Hymie – Brendan
Murray**

Mother, Betty, Ruthie, Martha – Deborah Vieyra

Jacqui enters as a mirror ball turns. 'Mean to Me' sung by Billie Holiday is playing. Jacqui indicates for the music to be tuned down.

JACQUI: From where I am standing, life is pretty crap. How crap, you may wonder...well lets just say that last night at 11 o'clock my cell-phone rang, and I had to answer cos it wasn't my mother...the guy on the other end of the phone clearly had the wrong number cos he asked me, 'what's your favourite scary movie?' I replied, 'I'm short and Jewish...do you still want to know?' He hung up.

I am an endangered species. Did you know that? Well I am, because all the Jews are leaving South Africa. The mothers, the mothers-in law, the bobbas, the yentas, the yente klufas, the kugels, the bagels and all the misunderstood, quirky, but quite charming individuals such as myself...have all either left or are in the process of leaving...so where does this leave me? Terrified that I'm gonna get hijacked or burgled...and single...

Enter Aunt Esther and Uncle Hymie. The nightclub feel is broken. We are now in a restaurant.

ESTHER: It is so safe in Australia. My friend Shoshi says that at 3am I could walk the streets, hey, 3am...the streets...alone....

HYMIE: You are fast asleep by 3am...

ESTHER: Not since I started going through the change...the hot flushes keep me up all night...

HYMIE: What woman your age walks the streets at 3 am?

ESTHER: I'm just saying that if I lived there, I could...

HYMIE: But why would you?

WAITER: Hi my name is Paul and I'll be your waiter. Would you like me to run through the specials...

JACQUI: Please...}

ESTHER: Yes go ahead....}

WAITER: Today's soups are minestrone, as well as leek and potato, for mains we have tomato breede, oxtail stew, chicken in red wine sauce served with...

Hymie and Esther talk right through the waiter's 'rehearsed' recital of the specials.

ESTHER: No none of that for us. '

HYMIE: *(Looking at menu)* Pasta...where are you pasta...tomato and herb pasta...hmmm...really now...I mean there's no point...I can make that at home...boil the pasta...add tomato sauce and pepper...essentially that's what it is...forty two *ronds*...forty two *ronds* they want to charge for boiled pasta and tomato sauce...

ESTHER: For that price...they should add cream, or maybe roasted veg...the open sandwiches and salads look very good and none of us are getting any thinner...

JACQUI: I'll have the rump steak with extra chips... *I'm not even hungry but my Uncle Hymie is so cheap, I have to order something pricey...*

ESTHER: What do I want? The print on this menu is so small...

HYMIE: Tell me...are you a student?

WAITER: Yes sir.

HYMIE: What are you studying?

WAITER: Politics and philosophy.

HYMIE: Well now tell me...just out of interest...how do you politically and philosophically justify charging forty two ronds for something called tomato and herb pasta?

WAITER: Well sir...perhaps you would like to take that up with management...

HYMIE: No no...I'm just interested in your opinion...I mean you must admit it's a little expensive...I mean even if it's served with Italian bread....

ESTHER: Cottage cheese on rye for me and a glass of water...no ice with a slice of lemon...

WAITER: For the gentleman?

HYMIE: Um... I'll have the tomato and herb pasta.

ESTHER: So Jacqui...how are things?

JACQUI: Same old, same old...

ESTHER: Have you got your driver's license yet?

A siren is heard. With it we return to the nightclub feel.

JACQUI: Well, now you know nearly everything that there is to know about me...I'm single, 23 years old and I can't drive...okay 24 years old...but I am going to get my driver's license...I am going for lessons. I'm going to a guy called Abraham. He is way famous. Everyone who goes to him passes first time...he hasn't told me that I can book my license yet, but he will...any day now....

You should see me in that car. I am a complete nervous wreck the second I get behind the wheel. On a good day, before a driving lesson, I fear losing control of the wheel and killing myself, the instructor and six pedestrians, who just wanted to cross the road, but were killed, because my selfish desire to be independent. The worst part is that moment when I get into the car. Abraham on my left and some idiotic eighteen year old in the back who I have to take home. It's intense. I tell you...there ain't no rescue remedy strong enough.... (*Acting paranoid*) Foot on clutch and into first. Foot on clutch and petrol and why am I not moving? Why am I not moving? Okay, turn the engine on. Handbrake down, accelerate and clutch and oh my God I'm driving. Aahhh, I just started moving and a stop street...what do I do...break...clutch in...break to stop. But at least I have Abraham next to me. (*As Abraham*) Not so nervous Miss Jacqui, not so nervous. This is your tenth lesson. You can mos drive...just relax. Now change to second...not so rough with the gears, gently Miss Jacqui, you must touch the gears like you touch a man's privates...gently Miss Jacqui, gently." Abraham is something else. And the conversations we have in that car. (*As Abraham*) "You know Miss Jacqui, every week I play the weakest link. I think of all my learner drivers ne...and I decide who must be the weakest link." I mean I had to be the weakest link, so I said, "Abraham am I the weakest link?" (*As Abraham*) "No Miss Jacqui...and I don't just say it cos you sitting next to me...you were close, but pipped at the post by Talia Rabinowitz...she keep crashing into the curb." Now Abraham teaches every neurotic Jew in Cape Town to drive and in his life-time he must have dealt with worse than me, but losing control of the steering wheel every time I change gears, can't be good.

Restaurant scene continues, time has passed they have finished their meals.

ESTHER: Maybe it's just as well you don't drive...I mean no where in Cape Town is safe these days...

HYMIE: And Anti-Semitism is everywhere you know.

ESTHER: It's a very dangerous time to be driving a car...extremely dangerous... and in this country to be white and Jewish...not good...just not good...a very dangerous time to be white and Jewish and driving a car...and all the young people...they say

they've never experienced any anti-Jewish feeling ...they just don't know that they have because it's latent. Latent anti-Semitism...they want to see the good in people and that's all very well, but it's out there...it's out there...and as a Jew you must be aware....latent Anti-Semitism (*Hymie signals for the bill*)

HYMIE: We are the underdogs of society...underdogs

ESTHER: We have suffered...and we'll continue to suffer...that's just the nature of our people...

HYMIE: Everyone has these pre-conceived notions about us...that's what really grates me....

ESTHER: You know, I like having my hair and nails done, so what? So sue me...

HYMIE: I'm just adding this up...Estie have they added this up right?

ESTHER: Um...checking...yes...

HYMIE: Now I'm going to leave a nice tip...(*he signals for the waiter who arrives*) open it up, don't be shy...there you see that's nice tip...I think you should know that I am Jewish and we are very generous people...we always give very nice tips...

We return to the nightclub feel.

Now that I'm a grown-up...kind of...Judaism is not as confusing as it was. The only thing that I don't understand is BARUCH HASHEM...because you say it when things are good and bad. She's had a baby...Baruch Hashem, she died of cancer, Baruch Hashem...I guess I will always live my life by one rule that my Bobba taught me...always do good for people...ALL people...whenever you can, do a good deed...if you don't do a good deed for a person or say something bad about someone...put some money in the blue box...you see the blue box collects money

which gets sent to Israel to plant trees...sending money to Israel to plant trees is a good deed...by the end of tonight there will be a lot of trees in Israel...

I have a problem with milestones. I think it's because my first milestone: coming home from the hospital happened far too early. I was barely a day old and my mother and I were brought home. My father decided that they weren't feeding me enough...now you know who I get the paranoia from. It all went downhill from there. You see, I have always been a late starter. I was a late walker, a late talker, I was in nappies till I was old enough to chose them myself...Huggies don't pinch as much as other nappies. I grew up in a house that was covered...and I mean covered...wall to wall in antiques... everything...from the furniture to the cutlery and the Persian rugs reeking of dog pee. Lets just say that the house was not exactly baby-proof...I had to learn quickly. Throwing a ball in that house would have been a death wish. Simple maneuvers such as going to the toilet had to be carefully thought out so as not to disturb a hanging plate or picture. Hence my concept of space is completely screwed up, which is probably why I can't park. I wish I could say that I'm normal and that I come from a normal family, but that would be a lie. I grew up with a group of eccentrics. A father who collects antiques and gardens when not collecting antiques, a mother insistent on inflicting both the French language and the latest trends in pop psychology on anyone who will listen, a Bobba, or granny, I'm gonna use a key phrase to describe her. When clearly losing an argument she would always back up her point by saying, "according to MY Jewish religion" you couldn't argue with that. It was clearly her religion...no one else's. A brother and sister who were and still are bent on killing each other.

Childhood really wasn't my thing. I was in a constant state of anxiety. Growing up in a museum is really crap. I was convinced that if we lived in a house with carpeting, lower ceilings and no antiques, then maybe, just maybe, I would have a normal family. This was by no means a conventional upbringing. The biggest problem being that Jewish parents all over the world know that when their child hits a certain age, they need to start explaining the differences between Judaism and Christianity because...there are...well...differences between the two. It's like...the religious equivalent of the birds and the bees speech. And lets just say that it needs to be

done...tastefully...tactfully...the way this is handled is will be remembered forever and ultimately effects the way the kid is going to feel about his or her Jewish identity. My parents never thought to give me the talk and they sent me to an Anglican nursery school, where I would hear the words "Christ has risen" a good three or four times a day. So one day after school I go to my Bobba's house and sing something about "Christ our Lord" and "church bells ringing" and the woman goes nuts. "It's a shanda! It's a shanda! Why are you singing these Yokishe songs? Anyway, my dad gets the hint...and it's now time for "the talk". He sits me on his knee and says, "Jewish People do not believe in Jesus, we only believe in one god". Fair enough. "That is why hundreds of years ago, your Bobba killed Jesus." Now that right there puts Jewish guilt on a whole new level! Ya, that year that I turned 5 was the most traumatic of my life. I would blush every time we sang a song about Jesus at school, knowing that I was somehow responsible for his death. Anyways the whole thing came to a head a year later. My Anglican nursery school put on a Christmas pageant. All the kids were angels except: the Jewish child, the Muslim child and the coloured child...who were robbers. Mel Gibson, couldn't have done it better, but my Bobba was horrified, so therefore I was whipped out of the Anglican school and put in a Jewish day school, where I learned all the wonders of my religion...and got more holidays than public schools. At last I was on the road to normality and my bed-wetting was reduced to Thursday nights only.

Maybe my life isn't that bad now. I mean, one thing that is fabulous is that my brother and sister have both left home. London...gee...that's a surprise huh? And it's really bizarre...see all it took were two violent and overbearing children to leave for my parents to realize that maybe I'm a rather interesting, fascinating person...I'm their favourite now...the three of us living in that antique jungle...yes...I still live at home...all ethnic people of my age still live at home...it's peaceful...we communicate...I have power over the remote...when I was a child I used to fantasize about my brother and sister being sent off to boarding school and life being so simple and happy...and now I have that...what I've always dreamed of...two parents all to myself and a dog named Timmy who is more or less house-trained. It's wonderful when your parents get older...they really chill out and learn to relax....my dad lives for his antiques and his garden...I mean at night he gets up on the hour to water it...this summer is going to be very interesting...cos I'm sure it's

because of my dad's garden that those water restrictions have been put in place...my mom is always on call with a French saying or a cheesy line that you can find on the back of a sugar sachet in a restaurant for all his hysteria and neurosis caused by the antiques and the garden.

We are now in the house.

FATHER: *(father is screaming violently-stand-up mode is broken)* DOLL *(pause)*

DOLL *(pause)* DOLL *(pause)* JACQUI JACQUI WHERE THE HELL IS EVERYONE?

JACQUI: *That'll be my dad. He's quite mellow dramatic, incase you hadn't realized. You should hear him sneeze...I'm here what's wrong...*

FATHER: Where's your mother?

JACQUI: She's on the phone.

FATHER: She's always on the bloody phone. My roses, they've stolen my roses...

JACQUI: *Did I mention paranoid?*

FATHER: Why in God's name would anyone do such a thing? What kind of a person skips a wall and pulls out two of somebody's rose bushes...double delights nogal!

JACQUI: Daddy, it just makes no sense...I don't think someone's stealing your roses...

FATHER: We have the most beautiful garden in Cape Town. All those Constantia bitches are jealous of us...they'll stop at nothing...

Mother enters.

MOTHER: What's all the commotion about? I have news it's important...

FATHER: My roses. Someone skipped the wall and pulled out two bushes...

MOTHER: I don't believe it...

FATHER: Oh god why me? Why me? I feel so invaded...

MOTHER: This is the third break-in, in a month...we are sitting here powerless, completely vulnerable...

JACQUI: It's not a break-in. They're only stealing roses...

FATHER: Oh I wish I was dead...I'd be better off dead...

MOTHER: Right...time to take action...we will not be victims!

FATHER: You right! We call the police...

JACQUI: I think the police have enough on their plate...

MOTHER: This more of a community problem...I know what we'll do... I have a connection at the Constantia Chronicle...we'll write an article making people aware of what has happened to us...this is a violation of our privacy...it's unacceptable!

FATHER: That's a good idea...if we could stop rose theft in the neighborhood then my suffering has not been in vain...I don't want anyone to go through what I've been through...I wouldn't wish this on my worst enemy...

MOTHER: I'll write an article tonight, I'll end it with a poem, written in couplets, and get it in the next issue...l'importance c'est un rose, l'importance! I have news...they managed to get a cheap flight...Adam and Debbie are coming to stay...

JACQUI: Adam and Debbie. My brother and sister. They can't plan a trip in advance, they always have to spring a visit on us. News like that can really ruin a

perfectly good day. I mean I was doing really well up until now. You don't understand, but the second they come back to stay it's like nothings changed...there's no space...I can't get a word in edge ways...it's like I don't exist...I can't exist... I don't get to watch any of my soopies, I have to stash food in my underwear drawer! No TV, no food, I don't have anything else!

You see, you don't know what it was like growing up with my brother and sister. It could get pretty violent. From the day he was born, my sister made it her life's mission to beat the crap out of my brother whenever possible. With the arrival of my brother and sister my plans to get a driver's license and possibly a boyfriend will naturally have to be put on hold. They haven't changed a bit...my sister is as volatile as ever and my brother is as pathetic as ever. Once they come home they regress back to childhood...and not in a good way...I have to tag along with them in this regression...once more I'm the incompetent youngest child, unable to have an opinion on anything and incapable of getting her needs met...only this time without the bed-wetting...

We are now in the house. Mother is listening to a self-help tape.

DEBBIE: (*Calling off stage*) ahhhh...bite me....

Sister is in pajamas, robe and slippers, munching chips...

DEBBIE: Maa...he's doing it again...maaaaaaaaaa!

MOTHER: Doing what?

DEBBIE: I dunno...breathing...he is so annoying... tell him to stop...

Enter Adam...a whiney 'momma's boy.

ADAM: Motheer...I feel that Debbie is hogging the chips...

DEBBIE: What are you complaining about? You've had half the packet!

ADAM: I'm hungry! It's not my fault you so fat that you need to eat so much! Fatty fatty boom boom...*(he chases after her teasing and singing)*

DEBBIE: Mommy...help....

MOTHER: I can't take this anymore...the second you come home you lower the vibration...NOW SIT DOWN...

They sit like children. Sister stuffs more chips in her mouth.

MOTHER: Okay...now you are 29...and you are 31...you both function beautifully when you are out of this house...you are a very good waitress...and boytie I don't know what you do in London but I'm sure it's legal...and I am a person too. I write poetry now and meditate. I am in and out of the townships educating people...you know...Bontiheavel and Athlone...

DEBBIE: Those aren't townships...

MOTHER: Well they look like townships...look...you are both grown-ups. I am not your mother, I am your friend. We are all friends. So don't come to me for mothering cos I can't give it to you...I can only give you friendship...this label 'mother' is not who I am anymore... 'mother' is a highly over-rated archetype.

She exits. Debbie and Adam haven't really paid any attention to her.

ADAM: Why you so fat?

DEBBIE: OH BUGGER OFF...

ADAM: Seriously though...you've gained like a hundred kilos...

DEBBIE: You know, you've only been in London for five months...loose the accent...

ADAM: What accent? Ever think of coming home?

DEBBIE: To this dysfunctional shit hole? Chances.

ADAM: You know what I miss? Having a maid. She makes your bed, does the cleaning, cooking, washing, tucks you at night...

DEBBIE: What?

ADAM: Nothing...and there's always someone around when you've had a shit day...well...at least the dog is always home...what is this?

DEBBIE: What's what?

ADAM: This...are we having an honest communication?

DEBBIE: Get a life...

Jacqui and Abraham, a Cape coloured man, are in the car.

ABRAHAM: Not so nervous Miss Jacqui...change to third...

JACQUI: You see Abraham...it's called tzdakah...

ABRAHAM: Change to fourth...

Jacqui looks confused.

ABRAHAM: Straight back...

JACQUI: It's kind of like charity, but it isn't...

ABRAHAM: Nie man...sounds just like charity....

JACQUI: Well the whole point of it is that if you give tzedakah you shouldn't be like all proud of yourself...and you shouldn't make the person you giving it to feel bad about themselves...

ABRAHAM: Sounds like a fancy name for charity...break for second....

They turn.

JACQUI: Well I think it's wonderful...it really isn't that hard to be a good person...

ABRAHAM: Going orange...clutch in...breaking...break to stop...

They stop with a jolt. A lady beggar approaches the car.

ABRAHAM: Fucking beggars...jy! *Fock* off!

JACQUI: Wait...no! I know her! Betty...how are you? Get in the car...

ABRAHAM: En nou? Wat gaan nou aan?

Betty makes herself comfortable and grabs Abraham's cigarette.

JACQUI: How are you...

ABRAHAM: Change to second...

BETTY: Very bad...the lady she kicked me out of my room!

JACQUI: Serious?

BETTY: Ser-I-ous! Need one hundred and twenty...how am I to get one hundred and twenty?

ABRAHAM: Change to third...

JACQUI: If you get it today do you get your room back?

BETTY: Yes...

ABRAHAM: Fourth Miss Jacqui...

JACQUI: Well I've got it...just open my bag there and it's yours...

ABRAHAM: En nou?!

BETTY: There's only one fifty...

JACQUI: Oh you can keep the extra...

ABRAHAM: Miss Jacqui...don't give that lady your money...is jy mal?

JACQUI: Abraham be nice...remember...no one should feel shame when receiving tzdakah...don't embarrass her...it took her a lot of courage to ask me...

ABRAHAM: Tzedakah se fucker man...you throw your money away...

JACQUI: I don't see it that way...where to Betty?

BETTY: Station please...

ABRAHAM: Start breaking...break to stop.

They stop with a jolt.

Jacqui enters house.

ADAM: How was your lesson Shuumacchher? You know I can't believe you twenty-four and you don't have a license aren't you embarrassed? I mean I got my license on my eighteenth birthday...

DEBBIE: And you drove into our house three hours later...you didn't even know the difference between the brake and accelerator...I'm sure even she knows that...

JACQUI: *I wouldn't be too sure...* where did you get those chips?

DEBBIE: Your room...

JACQUI: Those are mine! I was saving them for this afternoon...

DEBBIE: Why?

JACQUI: I have a friend coming over.

DEBBIE: Who? Ruthie?

Debbie and Adam have a giggle to each other.

JACQUI: Don't be stupid man.

ADAM: Is Ruthie like slow? Like is she you know like retarded?

JACQUI: No! She's bulimic, not retarded...

ADAM: *(To Debbie)* You should ask for some tips...

JACQUI: What am I gonna feed people? You've both eaten us out of house and home!

ADAM: I dunno...why don't you grab the car and nip down to the shops and get something else...

JACQUI: You know...I really hate having both of you here and I can't wait till you go home...

ADAM: Home? We are home...

JACQUI: No no...this is not your home...this is my home!

DEBBIE: You are so friggin' uptight...you wouldn't last a second in London....

ADAM: Hmmm... I think I've just figured you out. You know what your problem is?

DEBBIE: What?

ADAM: You are unapproachable...

DEBBIE: Excuse me?

ADAM: You are completely unapproachable...the hair, the face, the clothing...it all says 'don't come near me'...

DEBBIE: Well you're annoying!

ADAM: Annoying maybe...but approachable...yes...

JACQUI: What are you on about?

ADAM: I was just thinking about how easily I make friends...while sister Debbie here struggles somewhat...

DEBBIE: God you talk shit sometimes...

ADAM: But it's true...okay...think about it...on the plane down here...how many friends did you make? I mean did you even talk to anyone?

DEBBIE: I don't talk to people when I'm on a plane, nobody makes friends on a plane you loser...

ADAM: See what I'm saying...unapproachable...well since you asked, I made five friends...six if you include the little Japanese boy who made me the flower out of paper...that's your problem...you never make friends...

Jacqui goes into stand-up mode.

JACQUI: **Sometimes I find people boring.** Really boring in fact. No matter how much interest I manage to fake and I am SUPERB at faking interest, I always realize that no one is as fantastic as I am! It's not like it's about intelligence or anything...it's...it's about the stories you can tell. Sometimes I meet a person and we click instantly...because they have so many stories. There is nothing worse than being in a friendship and realizing one month down the line, that you have heard every story this person has to tell. ' And when you take them out, they start recycling stories and telling other people the same story that made you laugh a month ago but in retrospect, isn't really that funny. They say in your twenties, you supposed to start separating out from your first family and find a group of friends to take their place...well that's what American television would have us believe...but we all know that it doesn't really work that way...don't we? But I have friends...well one friend and one *rachmonus*. A rachmonus is someone that you pity so much, you can't get rid of them. I attract rachmonuses all the time...I'm a rachmonus magnet...I usually have about five to seven of them on the go, but ever since I started learning to drive, I've been so pre-occupied that even the rachmonuses don't call me...

Jacqui and Loren are in the house.

LOREN: So they here for two weeks?

JACQUI: Ya...

LOREN: That really sucks...

JACQUI: You telling me...

LOREN: Where they now?

JACQUI: Some ETV wrestling thing...

LOREN: Well it's all good, I'm getting the new Simms so I won't really need to see you for the next two weeks...

Ruthie enters.

RUTHIE: PANIC ATTACK! PANIC ATTACK! Oh, ok, I'm in trouble...it's really serious...I don't know what to do...

JACQUI: *I really hate people who pop in. Without phoning first. Let alone a rachmonus...who pops in without phoning first...* Ruthie we're kind of in the middle...

RUTHIE: PANIC ATTACK! PANIC ATTACK!

LOREN: What's going on...just calm down...just take a deep breath and start from the beginning.

RUTHIE: Well...it's Craig...you know...he manages the Kosher Restaurant in Milnerton...he's quite intense...cos like I've been having a scene with him for like three weeks and he smses me at like twelve at night, 'i'm going to sleep and thinking of you' and then again at like five in the morning, 'i've just woken up and I'm thinking of you' so we went to the bioscope last night...he wants to buy me a slush puppy but I say no cos they so sugary and too much sugar makes my palate feel like raw, and we were going to share a large popcorn but then he put all that cheese and onion salt on that stinks so bad that I couldn't eat any of it...

JACQUI: *This could go on for hours. Ruthie not only over shares but also can't leave out a single detail...quite the most outspoken rachmonus I've ever had...*

LOREN: Cut to the chase...

RUTHIE: Well we at his house...and his parents are asleep...but I only had one glass of wine...cos I was thirsty and there was no cool-drink in the house and they don't have a water-filter...okay...I'm just going to say it...okay...coz like...he was starkers but I still had all my clothes on and now I don't know if I need the morning after pill, but now because it's already two-thirty so it's too late isn't it? Like I could be pregnant or have hiv/aids...no I don't think I'll get hiv/aids cos he is Jewish...

JACQUI: *I don't think I can handle this....* Ruthie...I think you'll be fine...

RUTHIE: But how can you know for sure?

LOREN: Trust me...you'll be fine...

RUTHIE: Thank god for you guys, I was in a state of note. Can I stay a while? My mom's been on my case about being bulimic again... It's so hard to find a decent man in Cape Town, that's why next month I am going to Joburg for sixteen days. The only problem is they're very religious there...

LOREN: So brush up on your torah and you'll be fine...

RUTHIE: There are just no nice men. It's so hard.

LOREN: I think I might die alone.

JACQUI: *I don't know why they are so damn paranoid about finding a relationship. I'm very chilled out about the whole situation. All Jewish women get married. You see, eventually all Jewish men dump their long-term gentile girlfriends and marry Jewish women...I intend to be one of those women...*

LOREN: Really, I think I might die alone. I mean, all I do is play Simms, sleep and eat...and think about dying... alone...what's it like to have bulimia?

RUTHIE: Over-rated...

JACQUI: I think you'd be better off with a drug habit...you'd be thin and happy.

LOREN: What's that smell?

JACQUI: What smell?

RUTHIE: Her house always smells like that...

LOREN: No but it's particularly strong today...

JACQUI: What? What?

LOREN: Dog shit honey, I definitely smell dog shit...

JACQUI: I can't smell...you mean my house smells like dog shit?

LOREN: Most of the time.

RUTHIE: No, dog pee most of the time, dog shit today...you can't smell it cos you used to it.

JACQUI: Well thanks for telling me...shit...I thought Timmy and I were making a break through but we clearly aren't...(she sniffs)I think the two of you are being really anal, I can't smell a thing...whoa I can see it...and now I can smell it....I HATE THAT DOG!!

LOREN: Thank God you've finally come to your senses.

JACQUI: What do I do?

LOREN: Clean it.

JACQUI: No, I can't, I'll gag...

RUTHIE: Get the maid to do it...

JACQUI: Sshhh!!

RUTHIE: What? Get the maid to do it...

JACQUI: SSSHHH!

RUTHIE: Why are you shushing me?

JACQUI: (*whispering*) She doesn't like to be called that...

RUTHIE: But that what she is. She's a maid!

JACQUI: SSSHHH!! Domestic, house-keeper...whatever, but don't call her a *maid*.

RUTHIE: Well whatever she is, it's her job and she must come clean it...

JACQUI: It's Sunday. She's off....I'm not cleaning that...

LOREN: Well someone's got to be *made* to do it cos that smell is offensive...

JACQUI: Just let it harden and she'll do it tomorrow morning...

LOREN: That's gross! You can be really disgusting sometimes...

RUTHIE: What are we going to do?

JACQUI: Move to another room?

They exit.

We now move to the house. ADAM runs in shrieking and clutching his arm...

ADAM: Ooooooow...you've really done it this time...I'm telling you...you've cracked the bone...again...

DEBBIE: You are so pathetic...grow up...

ADAM: The pain is unbearable!

DEBBIE: Well then next time don't take any of my chips without asking...

ADAM: Oooowwwwaaaa...

Mother enters with a newspaper and a packet of frozen peas...she hands the frozen peas to Adam to place on his arm...

MOTHER: We're in the chronicle....

DEBBIE: Huh?

MOTHER: The chronicle! The chronicle! A picture of our garden with an article and a poem written by moi.

JACQUI: And a picture of our house on the front page!

ADAM: I would come see but the pain...

Father enters.

FATHER: We are officially fucked...

MOTHER: What?

FATHER: Apparently we are not supposed to be watering the garden on an even day. That wasp bitch that lives opposite us just told me that...

MOTHER: Which one? They all look the same...

FATHER: The one that's Anti-Semitic...she always wears a cardigan and pearls...

JACQUI: That narrows it down...

FATHER: She lives in the house with the Eagle statues...

DEBBIE: Those eagle statues are very 'third Reich'...

FATHER: I gave her a piece of my mind...I said to her...listen you...mind your own business...my wife is a second generation Holocaust survivor...every time she drives past your eagles she has a panic attack...so how about minding your own business...

DEBBIE: And?

FATHER: That didn't go down too well...we are officially fucked...

We move into stand-up mode.

JACQUI: **I need some clarity**...a change of scenery...I need to stop being so selfish and do a good deed...lets go to Gurion's House...Jewish Home for the Aged...I find visiting there really rewarding...I have like a possey over there...they always have good advice for me...the nice thing is that they're always glad to see you even if you haven't been there in a while, all it really takes is a box of oranges and you're forgiven...

Dissolve into Gurion's house. Martha, Gerty and Tevya are playing cards.

TEVYA: I have got a great joke for you. I bet you haven't heard this one. An old man and a young man are traveling on a train. The young man asks the old man: "what time is it?" The old man keeps silent. "Excuse me sir, what time is it?" Still the old man keeps silent. "Excuse me sir, but I am asking you what the time is. Why don't you answer?" "Son, you are a stranger to me. If I answer you then you won't be a stranger. I'll have to invite you to my home, you're handsome and I have a beautiful daughter. You will both fall in love and you will want to get married. Tell me. Why would I want a son-in-law who can't even afford a watch? *He laughs to himself.*

GERTY: That's one of the oldest ones in the book.

MARTHA: I don't get it...

TEVYA: You see Martha, it's all about...

GERTY: Oh, forget it. Lets just play.

MARTHA: But I don't understand why the son and daughter would get married...

GERTY: I win!

MARTHA: Oy! There I was thinking it was my lucky day and you were sitting with my ace!

GERTY: I knew you were collecting aces.

MARTHA: How?

GERTY: How many times do I have to tell you? I can see your cards reflected in your glasses...

MARTHA: Oh well I...

JACQUI: Greetings everyone!

TEVYA: Oy Jacqui! What did you bring?

She looks in her plastic packet. She takes out a hot water bottle. She builds this moment up, timing it carefully. She takes a glass and pours out from the hot water bottle.

TEVYA: What is it? *He smells.* It's whiskey! It's whiskey! And not the cheap kind either!

Everyone is excited.

GERTY: This is a real treat. Those sons of bitches are always restricting our liquor.
(muttering) Sons of bitches.

Tevya pours for everyone. Glasses click.

GERTY: Can I deal you in?

JACQUI: Please.

Gerty deals. Jacqui sits.

MARTHA: So how have you been?

JACQUI: Okay I guess.

MARTHA: How's the driving going?

JACQUI: Not so great. I guess I don't have the best clutch control in the world. It's the whole balancing thing on hills...I just can't do it.

MARTHA: Do you have take the test on a hill?

JACQUI: Ya, unfortunately they do check if you can do a hill-start.

MARTHA: Why?

GERTY: Enough with the how, what why, already. Lets play.

They pick up their cards.

MARTHA: Not a single match. How about everyone else?

GERTY: Not a single match.

TEVYA: Not a single match.

JACQUI: Not a single match.

Silence. They are concentrating.

GERTY: You know, it was my mother who taught me to play cards. We gambled with matchsticks in those days. We were two children. My brother Oscar and I. Oscar married a very plain woman. But she was good to my mother...

TEVYA: Oscar, I knew of him...and his wife, what was her name?

GERTY: Miriam.

TEVYA: What?

GERTY: MIRIAM! MIRIAM! Now that his soul rests in peace I can say that it was a disgrace what he put that woman through...countless affairs...I remember the year...1968 I think...the Zeigella was actually living on the property.

JACQUI: The what?

GERTY: You know...the mistress...his lover. They were all going to Japan together. The wife and the mother in one room and the husband and the mistress in the other. I said to my mother that it was a disgrace. She agreed, she said it was an outrage and promised to have a word with my brother. That afternoon she's packing her suitcase, so I said, "I take it he's leaving the Zeigella behind?" "No" she says. "But I thought you said it was an outrage". "It is an outrage," she says, "but how else am I going to get to Japan?" *Beat.* I win!

HAROLD: You gypsy!

MARTHA: I lost again. I never win.

GERTY: Don't collect fours next time.

MARTHA: How did you know I was collecting fours? Put the cards away. I can't take it anymore.

HAROLD: Here here!

Cards are packed away.

TEVYA: Jacqui. I got a great joke for you. Bet you haven't heard this one.

GERTY: Enough with the friggin' jokes already, Jacqui, go into our common room, get the Alan King joke book, they are all in there.

TEVYA: It's funnier when you tell it! An Englishman in New York stopped at a shop window in the middle of which stood a lone clock. He went inside in the shop and asked the bearded man there to fix his watch. "Why are you asking me?" Asked the bearded man. "Aren't you a jeweler?"

"No, I am a mohel" "A what?" "I perform circumcisions" "Then why do you have a clock in your window?" "Mister" He sighs. "What would you put in the window?"

Tevya laughs. Suddenly so does Martha.

MARTHA: I got that one! That was funny! That was a good one! (*Beat*)
Oh Jacqui. *Pinches her cheeks.* What a gorgeous face you have. Still no boyfriend?

GERTY: Would she be here with us if she had a boyfriend?

MARTHA: I'm just checking. See, I know someone who would be perfect for you! He's intelligent. He's funny...bit of a problem with his eyesight...but he's very independent...well he also doesn't drive...but he works with computers...

GERTY: Leave her alone she's a good girl...I'm sure she can find someone on her own...my grandson on the other hand would be perfect...gives his parents such nachas everyday...call him...he'll take you to dinner...

JACQUI: I don't think so...

GERTY: My grandson not good enough for you?

JACQUI: *Yes...they are trying to set me up...all Jewish women are match-makers at heart...when you don't want the goods on offer there is an easy way out...Have I mentioned that I don't believe in marriage?*

GERTY: Oh...well...then you are entirely unsuitable...

MARTHA: What about the boy I like for you?

GERTY: She's a baby. What does she need commitment for? It's different for their generation. I'm learning to respect that...

MARTHA: I tell you. If I was of your generation. I would have been one of those lesbians, women are far less complicated...

TEVYA: Your life will be just as rewarding if you spend it serving your parents...like my sister Hannah...she always had a smile on her face...

HAROLD: And when they die, your life will carry on...we Jews you know, we take care of our own...I'm sure that there would be some charity organization that would look after you...give you a job and accommodation...

GERTY: I suppose at the end of the day, not everyone is the marrying kind...

HAROLD: Not everyone has bravery and ambition... so don't feel so badly about yourself...

MARTHA: It's all about options...we never had options...

GERTY: I tell you, if I could do it over, I never would've gotten married. Pain in the ass my husband was.

Jacqui downs the remains of the whiskey.

MARTHA: Mine was very nice...so....what about that boy I like for you?

Move into the house. The whole family are gathered around together on Adam and Debbie's command...

ADAM: We have news...take a load off everyone...sit down...may we interest anyone in a beverage...

JACQUI: What's going on?

DEBBIE: We've decided to come home...

JACQUI: What?

ADAM: That's right. We both gonna pack up over there and come home...isn't that great?

MOTHER: I thought you were happy in London...there's so much...opportunity for you there....

JACQUI: Why? Um...why would you do that? I don't understand...

ADAM: Look how good you got it here...dog...maid...parents...we miss that...we miss home...

FATHER: If you think that coming home means that you are gonna bleed me dry...you've got another thing coming...

DEBBIE: Well lets face it, it's not like I have a career there...I'm a waitress...might as well be a waitress here and sleep in my own bed...in my room...

MOTHER: You mean you want to move back into our house?

ADAM: Well that's what we meant by coming home...

MOTHER: Could you not afford to rent a flat?

DEBBIE: Now what would the point of that be if we're moving back to be with our family?

ADAM: And I've run up some debts in London...

FATHER: Well then you'll be up at five every morning to help water the garden and in a few months the roses will need pruning...and I expect a contribution for manure for the garden...it will be nice to live as a family again...everyone in the same house...

DEBBIE: It will be great to sleep in my bed in my room...

JACQUI: But it's my room now...

DEBBIE: Huh?

JACQUI: My room...it's my room...

DEBBIE: Your room is the meditation room remember?...

JACQUI: Excuse me? Mommy...tell her it's my room...

MOTHER: You are three adults who are no longer in need of mothering...or any form of parenting for that matter...

FATHER: Jacqui still needs parenting...when she's sixty and I'm one hundred she'll still be my baby...I think it'll be wonderful...all three children at home...if I win the Lotto, I'll take the whole family to Bali...

MOTHER: I think you two need to seriously think about this...it is an important decision...take your time...don't rush into it...I'm going to make everyone a nice cup of tea...come with me...

FATHER: I don't feel like tea...

MOTHER: NOW...

Parents exit.

DEBBIE: It's my room. It was my room first...

JACQUI: But you left...and I... now it's my room...

ADAM: Technically six months before I left it was my room...so I have some right to it as well...

DEBBIE: Shut up you idiot...

ADAM: Quite right. But the car is mine...they sold your car and kept mine...

DEBBIE: But I'm gonna need a car...it's not like you are going to I dunno... work... when you come back...

ADAM: That's not the point...

JACQUI: That's the car I'm learning to drive with...it's the car...it's my car...it's the car I'm going to drive when I get my license...I've named her and everything!

Marika De Klerk in loving memory! That car is my independence and you're taking it away from me...

DEBBIE: Oh please...like you ever going to get your license...

JACQUI: I am! I'm going for lessons everyday!

ADAM: That car is mine and you know it...

Debbie pushes Jacqui out of the way.

DEBBIE: Mercy for the car...

ADAM: What?

DEBBIE: Mercy...for the car...I get you to say mercy and I get the car...

ADAM: Oh you are on...you don't know this...but I've been taking martial arts...

DEBBIE: Why?

ADAM: For situations like this!

Adam and Debbie battle it out while Jacqui speaks... she is in a panic...

JACQUI: My whole life is flashing before me...is this really happening? Why is this happening? Is God punishing me for laughing about Ruthie's bulimia? They can't come home. It'll ruin everything...I've finally begun to find myself...I'm beginning to grow, I'm finally going to get my license... I don't want to share my mom with them...I mean...my friend...or whatever...what am I going to do...oh God if you exist and you like me at all, do something! Do something! DO SOMETHING!!!!

We hear Adam weeping 'mercy', followed by the sound of breaking plates.

JACQUI: That's not the kind of sound you want to hear in my house.

Mother and father rush in. Adam and Debbie emerge looking terrified.

Blackout

Lights up on Jacqui in stand-up mode.

Needless to say, they went back to London, I don't think I'll be seeing them for some time. Things haven't gone back to normal yet, my dad needs time to grieve...two imari plates lost to the world forever...and the possibility of two names being erased from his will...if the lotuses don't bloom this year I don't know what he'll do...

Enter Hymie and Esther...Hymie is grotesque and 'over the top' because he is being played by another actor...

ESTHER: A shame your brother and sister aren't here to join us...

JACQUI: Oh, yes...a shame...a crying shame...

HYMIE: When London calls...you know...like I always say...life...goes on...

JACQUI: That it does...

ESTHER: Jacqui, where do you see yourself ten years from now?

JACQUI: Huh?

HYMIE: What do you want to do with your life?

ESTHER: You so funny and very cute and that was fine when you were a little girl but you are a woman now...

JACQUI: Huh? *I've never really been comfortable with the term woman if someone is using it in reference to me.*

HYMIE: You need to start making decisions...find a place for yourself in the world...the time has come...get out there and make a difference...you know...do something with your life...

Stand-up mode to close the play.

JACQUI: The thing is...I have made a decision this year...a very important decision...I'm gonna get a driver's license...I can't find a place for myself in the world if I can't get there...I need to be able to drive without Abraham shouting keywords. (clutch in, brake for second gear Miss Jacqui) I don't want to be driven anymore. I hate having to stop off at antique shops, (just one minute, I'm sure that vase is ming) I hate listening to Edith Piaf blaring on the radio (non regretted rie an) Driving is the only step to freedom from world of clutter, violence, French proverbs and the guilt of having a Jesus killing grandmother. One day, I'll pass that test. I'll get over my phobia of hospital bend. I'll be driving down the freeway (*sound effect*) quite slowly cos it's downhill and speed kills...but driving...far away...(*sound effect harsh*) whoops, wrong gear.... and I don't know where I'll go...but I'll go where I want to go...I'll be on my own... the wind in my hair and the pedals at my feet... and I'll have time to think...and no one will have a hold on me...I won't owe anyone anything...in that car...I'll be free...I don't have to do anything I don't want to do. I'll go see movies with Sarah Michelle Gellar and Freddie Prince JNR because they are good actors...and Britney Spears is going to be blasting because she is a great prophet of our time...off I go...upward and onward onto greater things....driving in my car...by myself...upward and onward to greater things.

BLACKOUT

REFERENCES IN THE TEXT

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